A

TREATISE

OF

DIVINE

PROVIDENCE.

I. In General.

II. In Particular,

AS

Relating to the Church of God in the World.

By that late Eminent Minister of Christ Mr. *STEPH. CHARNOCKE*, B.D. and sometimes *Fellow* of *New-Colledge* in *OXON.*

Psalm 103. 19. *His Kingdom Ruleth over all.*

LONDON,

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Advertiſement.

WHat ever comes out in Print, of this late Reverend Mr. *Steph. Charnock*'s, will be Atteſted by Mr. *Edward Veal*, and Mr. *Richard Adams*, which is more fully expreſſed in the Epiſtle.

Norman 11 June 38

TO THE

READER.

Reader,

THou art here preſented with a little piece, of a Great Man; Great indeed, if great Piety, great Parts, great Learning, and great Wiſdom, may be admitted to claim that Title: And we verily believe that none well acquainted with him, will deny him his right; however malevolent Perſons may grudge him the honour. It hath been expected,

and desired by many, that some account of his Life might be given to the World; But we are not willing to offer violence to his ashes, by making him *so* publick now he is Dead, who so much affected privacy while he lived. Thou art therefore desired to rest satisfied with this brief account of him, That being very young he went to *Cambridge*, where in *Immanuel Colledge*, he was brought up under the Tuition of the present Arch-B. of *Canterbury*: What Gracious workings and Evidences of the New-Birth appeared in him while there, hath already been spoken of by † one, who was at that time his *Fellow Collegiate* and Intimate. Sometime he afterward spent in a private Family,

† *Mr.* Johnson *in his Sermon on occasion of Mr.* Charnocks *death*

mily, and a little more in the exerciſe of his Miniſtery in *Southwark*, then removed to *New-Colledge* in *Oxon*, where he was Fellow, and ſpent ſeveral years; being then taken notice of for his ſingular Gifts, and had in Reputation by the moſt Learned and Godly in that Univerſity, and upon that account the more frequently put upon Publick work. Being thence (the year after he had been Proctor) called over into *Ireland* to a conſtant publick Employment, he exerciſed his Miniſtery for about four or five years, not with the approbation only, but to the admiration of the moſt Wiſe and Judicious Chriſtians, and with the concurrent applauſe of ſuch as were of very different ſentiments from him in the things of Religion;

Nay, even thoſe that never loved his Piety, yet would commend his Learning and Gifts, as being beyond exception, if not above compare. About the year 1660. Being diſcharged from the publick exerciſe of his Miniſtery, he returned back into *England*, and in and about *London* ſpent the greateſt part of fifteen years, without any call to his old work in a ſetled way; but for about theſe five years laſt paſt hath been more known by his conſtant Preaching, of which we need not ſpeak, but let them that heard him, ſpeak for him; or, if they ſhould be ſilent, his works will do it. He was a Perſon of excellent Parts, ſtrong Reaſon, great Judgment, and (which do not often go together) curious Phanſie, of high Improvements,

ments, and general Learning, as having been all his days a moſt diligent and methodical Student, & a great Redeemer of time, reſcuing not only his reſtleſs hours in the Night, but his very walking time in the Streets from thoſe impertinencies and fruitleſs vanities, which do ſo cuſtomarily fill up mens minds, and ſteal away their hearts from thoſe better and more Noble objects, which do ſo juſtly challenge their greateſt regards: This he did by not only carefully watching (as every good Chriſtian ſhould do,) but conſtantly writing down his Thoughts, whereby he both govern'd them better, and furniſhed himſelf with many materials for his moſt elaborate diſcourſes. His chief Talent was his Preaching Gift, in which, to ſpeak

modeſtly, he had few equals. To this therefore, as that for which his Lord and Maſter had beſt fitted him (neglecting the practice of Phyſick, in which he had arrived at a conſiderable meaſure of knowledge) he did eſpecially addict himſelf, and direct his Studies, and even when Providence denyed him opportunities, yet he was ſtill laying in more Stock, and preparing for work againſt he might be called to it. When he was in Employment, none that heard him, could juſtly blame his retiredneſs, he being even when moſt private, continually at work for the Publick; and had he been leſs in his Study, he would have been leſs liked in the Pulpit. His Library, furniſhed (though not with a numerous, yet) a curious collection of Books

was

was his workhouſe, in which he laboured hard all the week, and on the Lords day made it appear, he had not been idle, and that though he conſulted his privacy, yet he did not endulge his Sloth. He was ſomewhat reſerved where he was not well acquainted, otherwiſe very free, affable and communicative, where he underſtood and liked his Company. He affected not much acquaintance, becauſe he would eſcape viſitants, well knowing how much the ordinary ſort of Friends were apt to take up of his time, which he could ill ſpare from his beloved Studies, meeting with few that could give him better entertainment with their company, than he could give himſelf alone: They had need be very good, and very learn-

learned by whoſe converſe he could gain more then by his own Thoughts and Books. He was a true Son of the Church of *England*, in that ſound Doctrine laid down in the Articles of Religion, and Taught by our moſt famous ancient Divines and Reformers; and a real follower of their Piety, as well as a ſtrenuous maintainer of the Truth they profeſſed. His Preaching was moſtly practical, yet rational and argumentative; to his Hearers underſtandings, as well as affections; and where controverſies came in his way, he ſhewed great Acuteneſs, and Judgment in diſcuſſing and determining them, and no leſs skill in applying them to practice: So that he was indeed *a Workman that needed not to be aſhamed*, being *able by ſound Doctrine*

Doctrine, both to exhort and convince gain-ſayers. Some have thought his Preaching too high for vulgar Hearers, and it cannot be denyed but his Gifts were ſuited to the more intelligent ſort of Chriſtians; yet it muſt withal be ſaid, that if he were ſometimes deep, he was never abſtruſe; he handled the great Myſteries of the Goſpel with much clearneſs and perſpicuity, ſo that if in his Preaching he were above moſt, it was only becauſe moſt were below him. Several conſiderable Treatiſes on ſome of the moſt important points of Religion, he finiſhed in his ordinary Courſe, which he hath left behind him, in the ſame form he uſually Writ them for the Pulpit. This comes out firſt as a *Prodromus* to ſeveral

others

others deſigned to be made publick, as ſoon as they can be with conveniency tranſcribed, which (if the Lord will, and ſpare life) ſhall be atteſted with our hands; and what ever any elſe ſhall publiſh, can be but imperfect Notes (his own Copies being under our reviſal at the requeſt of his Friends) taken from him in the Pulpit, in which what miſtakes do often happen every one knows, and we have found by experience in the caſe of this very Author, more then once. This was thought fit to be ſaid to ſecure the Reputation of the Dead, and prevent the abuſe of the Living. Theſe Sermons might have come out with the ſolemn ceremony of large recommendations, the Authors worth being ſo well known

to,

to, and his Preaching ſo highly eſteemed by the moſt eminent Miniſters about this City, but it was judged needleſs, his own *Works*, being ſufficient to *Praiſe* him.

One thing more is to be added, That ſuch as he is here, ſuch he is in his other pieces; ſo that thou haſt here, Reader, a ſpecimen of the ſtrain and Spirit of this holy Man, this being his familiar and ordinary way of Preaching, and theſe Sermons coming out firſt, not as if they were the non-ſuch of what he left behind him, but becauſe they could ſooneſt be diſpatched; and to obviate the injuries might elſe be done by ſpurious Treatiſes, both to him, and thee; and likewiſe by this little taſt to gratifie

fie the Appetites of ſuch who having been his Auditors, did long even with greedineſs, to Feaſt themſelves again upon thoſe excellent Truths, which in the delivery were ſo ſweet to them; Perhaps too it may quicken their appetites who never heard him, it may be never yet heard of him. If thou like this Cluſter, Fear not but the Vintage will be anſwerable: If this little earneſt be good Mettal the whole ſum will be no leſs currant. That a Bleſſing from Heaven may be upon this work, and upon thee in Reading, and Studying the Nature, and Beauty, and Ends of Divine Providence, and that the Lord of the Harveſt (eſpecially when ſo many are dayly called home)

home) would ſend forth more and more *ſuch* labourers into the Harveſt, is the hearty Prayer of

Thine in the Lord,

Richard Adams
Edward Veal

Ad-

Of Providence.

2 Chron. 16. 9.

For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole Earth, to ſhew himſelf ſtrong in the behalf of them whoſe heart is perfect towards him.

IN the beginning of the Chapter you find *Baaſha* King of *Iſrael* raiſing walls about, and Fortifying *Ramah*, a place about twelve miles from *Jeruſalem*, the Metropolis of *Judah*, intending by that means to block *Aſa* up, becauſe *Ramah* lay juſt upon the Road between *Jeruſalem* and *Samaria*, the Seats of the two Kings, *ver.* 1.

Baaſha was probably afraid of the Revolt of *Iſrael* to *Judah*, upon that Reformation of Religion wrought by *Aſa*, and therefore would Fortifie that place to be a hinderance, and to intercept any that

should pass upon that accompt. And to this purpose makes great preparation, as appears *ver.* 6. for with the provision *Baasha* had made for the Fortification of *Ramah*; *Asa* after the seizing of these materials builds two Towns, *Gaba* and *Mizpah*.

Asa seeing *Baasha* so busie about this Design, and fearing the consequence of it, hath recourse to carnal policy rather than to God: And therefore enters into league with *Benhadad* a neighbour, though an Idolatrous Prince, and purchaseth his assistance with the Sacrilegious price of the Treasure of the Temple, *ver.* 2, 3. And hereby engageth him to invade the King of *Israels* Territories, that he might thereby find work for *Baasha* in another part, and so divert him from that Design upon which he was so bent, *ver.* 3. *Go, break thy League with Baasha, that he may depart from me.*

Benhadad is easily perswaded by the quantity of Gold, &c. to break his League and make an Inroad, and proves victorious, and takes many Cities where the Magazines and Stores were laid up, *ver.* 4.

Baasha now to save his Countrey and make

make head againſt his Enemies, is forced to leave *Ramah*; whereupon *Aſa*, who watched his opportunity, ſeizeth the materials he had left for the fortifying of *Ramah*, and puts them to another uſe, *v.* 5, 6.

Hanani the Seer is preſently ſent by God with a threatning of War, becauſe he applies himſelf to a Heathen Prince, rather than to the Lord of Hoſts, *v.* 7. his ſin is aggravated by Gods former kindneſs to him, and experience he had given him of his miraculous Providence in his ſucceſs againſt that vaſt Army of the *Ethiopians* and *Lubims*, or *Lybians*, and that upon his recourſe to, or relyance on God. And that he ſhould afterwards have recourſe to the arm of Fleſh, was a diſparagement to Gods providential kindneſs, *v.* 8. He further aggravates his ſin by the conſideration of Gods general providential care of his Creatures, and the particular end of it, and of all his providences, *viz.* the good of his Church and people, *v.* 9. *For the eyes of the* Lord, &c. *Eyes of the* Lord, in Scripture, ſignify

1. *His knowledge*, Job 34. 21. *For, his eyes are upon all the waies of man, and*

he sees all his goings. Heb. 4. 13. *all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.* *

2. *His Providence,*

1. *For good,* So it notes his Grace and good Will; so his Eyes and his Heart are joyned together, 1 *Kings* 9. 3. *mine Eyes and my Heart shall be there perpetually, viz.* in his Temple, the place which he had hallowed to put his Name there for ever. *Psal.* 32. 8. I will guide him *with mine eye,* that is, I will counsel him, and direct him in a gracious and a favourable way. Therefore to be cut off from *the eye* of the Lord, is to be deprived of his favour, *Psal.* 31. 22. for none can be cut off from a simple knowledge of God: So *Zach.* 3. 9. *seven eyes upon one stone,* that is, the Providence of God was in an especial manner with Christ in the midst of his passion.

2. *For evil,* So it notes *His* anger and vindictive justice. *Esa.* 3. 8 *their doings are against the Lord, to provoke the eyes of his Glory,* Kindness and anger appear first in the Eye, one by its pleasantness, the other by its redness.

(*Run*) that notes diligence and care, an industri-

* τραχηλὸς *significat spinam dorsi, & in mactatis animalibus per spinam omnia apparent interiora, ita ut nihil latere potest.* Glassius, Vol. 3. 1. 106.

industrious inspection into all things. *Psal.* 119. 32. *I will run the ways of thy Commandments*; noting speed and diligence.

In the Verse, we have

I. *A Description of Gods Providence,*

II. *The end of it.*

I. *The description of* Gods *Providence.*

1. *The immediateness of it,* [*his eyes*] his own eyes, not anothers. Not like Princes, who see by their Servants eyes more than by their own, what is done in their Kingdoms; his care is immediate. Though Angels are the Ministers of his Providence, the Guardians and Watchers of the World, yet God is their Captain, and is alwaies himself upon the Watch.

2. *Quickness and speed* of Providence [*run*] His eyes do not only walk, but run the round, they are not slumbring eyes, nor drowzy-eye-lidds, their motion is quick and nimble.

3. *Extent of Providence* [*the whole Earth*] all things in the Earth, all the hairs on the Heads of these men: The meanest Worm as well as the mightiest Prince; the lowest Shrub

as well as the talleſt Cedar, every cranny, corner or chink of the Earth.

4. *Diligence of Providence* [*to and fro*] His care is repeated, he looks this way and that way, again and again, his eyes are not confin'd to one place, fixed on one object, but are alwaies rouling about from one place to another.

5. *The Efficacy of his Providence*; His care doth engage his ſtrength; he doth not only diſcover dangers, but prevent them; he hath Eyes to ſee and Power to order all things according to his pleaſure; Wiſe to ſee, and ſtrong to ſave.

II. *The end of Providence* [*to ſhew himſelf ſtrong*, &c.]

1. *Finis cujus*, [*to ſhew himſelf ſtrong.*] *Heb.* to make himſelf ſtrong, but beſt Tranſlated to ſhew himſelf ſtrong. It is not an addition of ſtrength, but an exerciſe of ſtrength that is here meant.

2. *Finis cui, or the Perſons for whom, thoſe that are perfect in heart.*

Doctrines,

Doct. 1. *There is a Providence exerciſed by God in the World.*

2. *All*

2, *All Gods Providences in the World, are in order to the good of his people.*

3. *Sincerity in Gods way gives a man an interest in all Gods Providences, and the good of them.*

1. For the First, *There is a Providential inspection and Government of all things in the world by God*: 'Tis not a bare sight of things that is here meant by Gods eye, but a sight and knowledge in order to the Governing and disposing of them. Veiw this Doctrine at your leisure, preached by God himself, with an inconceivable elegancy, and three whole Chapters spent in the Sermon, and * by the *Psalmist*. * Doct.

* Job 38, 39, 40.

Some observe that the society of Angels and Heavenly Creatures is represented *Ezek.* 1. by a quaternarian number, because the World is divided into 4 dimensions, *East*, *West*, *North* and *South*, as intimating the extention of Gods Providence over all parts. *

* Psal. 147, 148.

Things are not ordered in the World *cæco impetu*; not by blind fortune, but an alseeing deity who hath the management of all sublunary affairs. Τὶς μεγάλη δύναμὶς τῆς προνόιας * πάντα ὑπ' ἀρίστου νοῦ γίνεται, was the Theological Maxim of the *Stoicks*.

* Hudsons *Divine right of Government chap.* 6. *pag.* 53.

* *Clemens ad Corinth*, p. 34

Before I come particularly to explain the Providence of God, I ſhall lay down ſome Propoſitions as the Foundations of this Doctrine.

1. *God hath an indiſputable and peculiar Right to the Government of the World*: None ever queſtioned Gods Right, no nor his act, but thoſe that were ſwelled with an unreaſonable ambition, ſuch as *Nebuchadnezzar*, who for this cauſe underwent the puniſhment of a 7 years baniſhment from the ſociety of men. *

* Dan. 4. 17. None indeed that acknowledge a God, did or can queſtion Gods Right, though they may queſtion his Will and actual exerciſe of his Right. He is the Creator, and therefore is the Soveraign Lord and Ruler. The World is his Family, and as a Maſter, he hath an undoubted Right to govern his own Family; He gave all Creatures their beings, and therefore hath a right to enact their Laws, appoint their ſtations, and fix their ends. 'Tis as much his property and prerogative to rule, as it is to create. Creation is ſo peculiarly proper to God, that it is not communicable to any Creature, no not to Angels, though of a vaſt Capacity in

in other things, and that becauſe they are Creatures themſelves. 'Tis as impoſſible for one Creature or all to govern the World, and manage all the boyſterous paſſions of men to juſt and glorious ends, as to create them. 'Tis true, God uſeth inſtruments in the executive part of his Providence; but he doth not deſign the Government of the world only by Inſtruments. He uſeth them not for neceſſity, but ornament. He Created the World without them, and therefore can Govern the World without them.

Virtus Creativa eſt fundamentum providentiæ & argumentum ad providentiam. This right is founded upon that Creation, as he is the efficient cauſe of it. This right is alſo founded upon the excellency of his Being. That which is excellent having a right to rule in the way of that excellency, that which is inferiour; every man hath a natural right to rule an other in his own art and skill wherein he excells him: If it be the right of a chief Magiſtrate to manage the concerns of his Kingdom, with what reaſon can we deny that right to God;

2. *God only is qualified for the univerſal government*

government of the World. All Creatures as they were unable to create themſelves, ſo are unable to manage themſelves without the Direction of a Superior power, much more unable to manage the vaſt body of the World. God is only fit in regard of

1. *Power, Conſervation* is *continuata Creatio*; that power which is fit to Create, is only fit to preſerve. A continued Creation belongs as much to Omnipotency as the firſt Creation.

The Government of it requires no leſs power, both in regard of the numerouſneſs of the objects, and the ſtrange contrariety of paſſions in rational Creatures, and qualities in irrational; conſervation is but one continued act with Creation, following on from an inſtant to duration, as a line from its Mathmatical point. *

Tailors *exemplar, preface. 6. 31.*

2. *Holineſs and Righteouſneſs.* If *he that hates right* is not fit to govern, *Job* 34. 17. then he that is infinitely Righteous, and hath an infinite love to Righteouſneſs, is the fitteſt to undertake that task; without Righteouſneſs there would be nothing but confuſion in the whole Creation, Diſorder is the effect of unrighteouſneſs,

unrighteousness, as order is the effect of justice. The justest man is fittest for subordinate Government among men, and the infinite just God is fittest for the universal Government of the World.

3. *Knowledge,* An infinite knowledge to descry all the contrivances and various labyrinths of the hearts of men, their secret intentions and aims, is necessary. The Government of the World consists more in ordering the inward faculties of men touching the hearts, and tuning them to play what notes he pleases, then in external things. No Creature hath the skill or power to work immediately upon the will of man; neither Angels nor Devils can do it immediately, but by proposing objects and working upon the fancy which is not alwaies successful. He that created the heart knows all the wards of it, and hath only the skill to turn it, and incline it as he pleases; he must needs know all the inclinations of the Creatures and their proper activities since he alone conferred all those several principles and qualities upon them. * *Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the World, viz.* the particular natures, inclinations

* Act. 15. 8.

inclinations, inward motions, which no Creature fully underſtands; he needs no deputy to inform him of what is done, he is every where, and ſees all things: Worldly Governors cannot be every where eſſentially preſent.

God is ſo perfect in his knowledge of all things, that he cannot be impoſed upon by the evil ſuggeſtions and flatteries of men or Angels.

In nature it is ſo, the eye guides the body, becauſe that is the chief Organ of ſenſitive knowledge; the mind which is the ſeat of Wiſdom guides the whole.

4. *Patience*, Infinite patience is requiſite to the preſervation and government of the World in the circumſtances wherein it hath ſtood ever ſince the fall: What Angel though the meekeſt, or can all the Angels in Heaven be Maſters of ſo much patience as is needful for this work of governing the World, though for the ſpace of one day? Could they bear with all thoſe evils which are committed in the world in the ſpace of 24 hours? Might we not reaſonably conceive that they would be ſo tired with the obliquities, diſorders, deformities which they would

would ſee in the acts of men, (beſides all the evil which is in the hearts of men, which lye without the verge of their knowledge) that they would rather call for fire from Heaven to burn the World to Aſhes.

Averroes thought, that becauſe of Gods ſlowneſs to anger, he meddled not with ſublunary concerns: This rather fits him for it, becauſe he can bear with the injuries of wicked men, otherwiſe the world would not continue a moment. *Trap in Exod. 34.

Angels though powerful, holy, wiſe and patient creatures, yet being Creatures, they want the infiniteneſs of all theſe qualifications which are neceſſary to this government: Though they are knowing, yet they know not mens hearts; though they are wiſe, yet they may be charged with a folly uncapable of this; though holy, yet not able in this reſpect to manage it to the ends and deſigns of an infinite holineſs; though nimble, yet cannot be in all parts of the world at every turn: but the Providence of God is infallible, becauſe of his infinite wiſdom; indefatigable, becauſe of his omnipotency; and righteous, becauſe of his goodneſs

3. *There*

3. *There can be no reason rendred why God should not actually govern the World*, since He only hath a right and a fitness. If God doth not actually govern it, it is either because He cannot, or because He will not.

1. *Not because He cannot*, this inability must be either for want of knowledge, or want of power. The one if asserted, would deny his omnipotence, the other his omniscience; the one would make him a weak God, the other an ignorant God, and consequently no God.

2. *Not because He will not*; If He can and will not, it is, say some, a testimony of envy, that he maligns the good of his Creatures, but not to insist upon this; This must bee ither because of the

1. *Difficulty*, This cannot be: What difficulty can there be in a single word, or one Act of his will, which can be done by God without any molestation: Were there millions of Worlds as well as this? For still they would be finite, and so governable by an infinite Superior. May we not more reasonably think the forming such a Mass would require more *pains* then the government of it

it? The right ſtringing an inſtrument is more trouble to a skilful Muſitian, then the tripping over the ſtrings afterwards to make an harmony. What difficulty can it be to omnipotence? Is it a greater labour to preſerve and govern then it was to create? Doth not the Soul order every part of the body, and all its functions without any pain to it, and ſhall not the God that made that Soul ſo indefatigable, much more mannage the concernments of the World without labour to himſelf. Is it not as eaſie with God to guide all theſe things by one ſingle act of his Will, as for me by an act of my Soul to do many things without a diſtinct act of cogitation or conſideration before? Can it be more laborious to him, to govern the world, then it is to know all things in the world? He ſees all things in an inſtant by one act of his underſtanding, and he orders all Creatures in a moment by one act of his will. Can one act of his will be more painful, then one act of his underſtanding? Can he with a word make this great Ball, and can he not with as much eaſe order all to conform to the law of his own righteous will? Can a continual

nual eruption of goodneſs be a difficulty to an infinite Being, which we find natural to the Sun, to the Fountains, to the Sea, to many works of that Omnipotent goodneſs? Or,

2. *Diſparagement*, Denial of Gods Providence over the leſſer things of the World, did ariſe from the conſideration of the ſtate of Monarchs, who thought it an abridgment of their felicity and dignity to ſtoop to ſuch low conſiderations as the *minutula* of their eſtates might exact from them, but left them to their Vicegerents. But they conſider not that the felicity of God as it reſpects the Creature, is to communicate his goodneſs to as many ſubjects, as he hath made capable of his care. If it were his glory to create the world, can it be his diſhonour to Govern it? The glorifying his wiſdom is as honourable to him as the magnifying his power, though both are eminent in Creation and Providence, yet his wiſdom is more ſignal in the Governing, as his power was in framing of the world.

Why was it not as much a diſparagement to God to *Create* things contemptible in our eyes, as ſince he hath Created them

them to take care of them, and marſhal them for his own glorious ends. The Sun in the Heavens is a ſhadow of God, which doth not diſdain to communicate its natural goodneſs, and emit its beams to the meaneſt Creatures, and let the little flies ſport themſelves in them, as well as the greateſt Princes: and tranſmits its influences upon things obſcure and at a diſtance from it, whereby it manifeſts an univerſal regard to all. And would it not be a diſparagement to an infinite goodneſs to be out-ſtript by a Creature, which he hath ſet up for a natural communication of goodneſs to the reſt of the World? The very conſideration of the *Sun*, and the nature of it, gives us as much an account of God, as any inanimate being whatſoever: 'Tis as much the Suns honour to produce a ſmall Inſect, as the growth of the greateſt Plant.

Have not all Creatures a natural affection in them to preſerve and provide for their own; hath not God much more who endued all creatures with that diſpoſition? Whatſoever is a natural perfection in Creatures is eminently an infininite perfection in God. If it be therefore a praiſe to you to preſerve

* *Morna. de Verit. Relig. Chriſtian: Cap. 11*

your own, can it be a disgrace to God? You may as well say, it is as much a dishonour to him to be good, as to have a tender regard to his Creatures. Censure him as well you may for creating them for your delight as preserving and governing them for the same end. They are all good, for he pronounced them so, and being so, a God of goodness will not account them unworthy of his care. Are they now the Products of his omnipotent wisdom, and shall not they be the objects of his directing wisdom? If they are not unworthy of God to create, how can they be unworthy of God to govern them? It would be as much below him to make them, as to rule them when they were made.

Fourthly. 4. Therefore, *God doth actually preserve and govern the World*; though Angels are in Ministry in some particular works of his providence, yet God is the Steersman, who gives out his particular orders to them.

Jacobs Ladder had the top in Heaven, where God stood to keep it firm: Its foot on Earth, and the Angels going up and down upon several errands at their masters beck.

As

As God made all things for himself, so he orders the ends of all things made by him, for his own glory. For being the most excellent and intelligent agent, he doth reduce all the motions of his Creatures to that end for which he made them.

This actual government of the World by God brancheth it self out in three things.

1. *Nothing is acted in the World without Gods knowledge.* The vision of the *Wheels* in *Ezekiel* presents us with an excellent portraiture of providence, there are eyes round about the wheels. * The eye of God is upon the whole circle of the Creatures motion. In all the revolutions in the world, there is the Eye of Gods omniscience to see them, and the arm of his omnipotence to guide them: Not the most retired corner, or the darkest cell, not the deepest cavern, or most inward project, nor the most secret wickedness, not the closest goodness, but the eye of the Lord beholds it. * *Prov.* 15. 3. *The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.* He hears the words, sees the actions, knows the thoughts, registers the graci-

* Ezek. 18 *their rings were full of eyes,* &c.

* Pro. 15. 3.

ous discourses, bottles up the penitent tears and considers all the waies of men; not a whispered Oath, not an Atheistical thought, though but only peeping upon the heart, and sinking down again in that mass of corruption; not a disorderly word, but he knows and marks it. The Soul hath a particular knowledge of every act, because it is the Spring of every act in any member, and nothing is done in this little World, but the Soul knows it. Surely, then there is not an act done in the world, nor the motion of any Creature, but as God doth concurr to it, he must needs know what he doth concur to. The knowledge and ordaining every thing is far less to the infinite being of God, then the knowledg and ordaining every motion of the body is to a finite Soul.

Or, Suppose a Soul cloathed with a body of as big a proportion as the matter of the whole Creation, it would actuate this body, though of a greater bulk, and know every motion of it. How much more God, who hath infinity and excellency and strength of all Angels and Souls, must needs actuate this world, and know every motion of it? There is no-

thing

thing done in the World, but ſome Creature or other knows it, he that acts it, doth at leaſt know it: If God did not know it, the Creatures then in that particular knowledge would be ſuperiour to God, and know ſomething more than God knows; can this be poſſible?

2. *Nothing is acted in the World without the will of God.* His Will either commands it, or permits it. * *Pſal.* 135. 6. *Whatſoever the Lord pleaſed, that did he in Heaven and in Earth.*

Even the ſins of the World, his will permits them, his power aſſiſts in the act, and his Wiſdom orders the ſinfulneſs of the act for holy ends. The Four Chariots in *Zach.* 6. 2, 3, 4, 5. by which ſome underſtand *Angels*, are ſent upon commiſſion into the ſeveral parts of the world, and compared to Chariots, both for their ſtrength, their ſwiftneſs, their employment in a military way to ſecure the Church. Theſe are ſaid to come * out of the two Mountains of braſs, which ſignify the irreverſible decrees of God, which the Angels are to execute. He alarums up the Winds, when he would have *Jonah* arreſted in his flight. He

* Eph. 1. 11. *He works all things after the Counſel of his own will.*

* v. 1. *Reynolds.*

sounds a retreat to them, and locks them up in their Chambers. * Bread hath a natural vertue in it to nourish, but it must be accompanied with his secret blessing, *Matt.* 4.4.

* *Psal.* 107. 25, 29.

Virtuti primi actus; agunt agentia omnia quicquid agunt.

3. *Nothing doth subsist without Gods care and power.* His eyes running to and fro implies not only knowledge, but care. He doth not carelesly behold what is done in the World, but like a skilful *Pilot*, he sits at the helm and steers the World in what course it should Sail. Our being we owe to his power, our well-being to his care, our motion and exerting of every faculty, to his merciful providence and concurrence, *in him we live and move and have our being.* * He frames our being, preserves our life, concurs with our motion. This is an *Idea* that bears date in the minds of men, with the very notion of a God. Why else did the Heathen in all their streights fly to their Altars, and fill their Temples with cries and sacrifices? To what purpose was this, if they had not acknowledged Gods superintendency, his taking notice of their cause, hearing their prayers,

* *Act.* 17. 28.

consi-

conſidering their cries? Why ſhould they do this, if they thought that God did not regard humane affairs, but ſtood untouched with a ſenſe of their miſeries?

If all things were done by chance, there could be no predictions of future things, which we frequently find in Scripture, and by what wayes accompliſhed. Impoſſible it is that any thing can be continued without his care. If God ſhould in the leaſt moment withhold the influence of his providence, we ſhould melt into nothing, as the impreſſion of a Seal upon the water, vaniſhes, as ſoon as the Seal is removed, or as the reflection of the face in the glaſs diſappears upon the firſt inſtant of our removal from it. The light in the air is by participation of the light of the Sun; The light in the air withdraws upon the departure of the Sun The Phyſical and moral goodneſs the Creature would vaniſh upon the removal of God from it, who is the Fountain of both.

What an Artificer doth work may continue, though the workman dies, becauſe what he doth is materially, as to the matter of it, ready to his hands, he creates

not the matter, but only sets materials together, and disposeth them into such a form and Figure; But God gives a being to the matter and form of all things, and therefore the continuance of that being depends upon his preserving influence. * God upholds the World and causes all those laws which he hath impressed upon every Creature, to be put in execution; not as a man that makes a watch, and winds it up, and then suffers it to go of it self; Or that turns a River into another Channel, and lets it alone to run in the graff he hath made for it; but there is a continual concurrence of God to this goodly frame. For they do not only live but move in him, or by him; his living and omnipotent power runs through every vein of the Creation, giving it life and motion and ordering the acts of every part of this great body. All the motions, of second causes are ultimately resolved into the Providence of God, who holds the first link of them in his hands. * More particularly the nature of Providence may be explained by Two propositions.

*Stillingfleet Orig. sacræ. lib. 3. cap. 3. § 3.

* Hos. 2. 21, 22.

First Proposition. *The universality of it.* His eyes run to and

and fro throughout the whole Earth.

'Tis over all Creatures, 1. *The high-* First
eſt. 2. *The loweſt.*

I. *The higheſt and moſt magnificent pieces of the Creation.*

1. *Over Jeſus Chriſt,* the firſt born of every Creature. Gods providence was in an eſpecial manner converſant about him, and fixed upon him. It was by the *determinate Counſel of God,* that he was delivered up: * His providence was diligently exerciſed about him in his whole courſe. Chriſt anſwers his Mothers ſolicitouſneſs with the care his Father took of him. * Do you not know that I am about thoſe things my Father takes care of? † This expoſition beſt agrees with his reproof, who blames them for creating ſo much trouble to themſelves upon their miſſing him in the Town. 'Tis not, why do you interrupt me in my diſpute with the *Jewiſh* Doctors? But [How is it that you ſought me? Do you think I am not under the care of my Father?] It was particularly exerciſed on him in the midſt of his paſſion. * *Seven eyes* were *upon* the *Stone,* Seven a number of perfection, a perfect and peculiar care of God attended him.

* Acts. 2. 23.

* Luk. 2. 49. *wiſt you not that I muſt be about my Fathers buſineſs?* ἐν τοῖς τοῦ πατρός. Hammond *in loc.*

* Zach. 3. 9.

2. *Over*

2. *Over Angels and Men.* The Soul of the leaſt Animal and the ſmalleſt Plant is formed and preſerved by God, but the breath of Mankind is more particularly in his hand: *Job.* 12. 10. *In whoſe hand is the Soul of every living thing, and the breath of all Mankind.*

1. *Over good Angels and Men.* He charges his Angels with folly and weakneſs. They cannot direct themſelves without his wiſdom, nor preſerve themſelves without his power. God hath a Book of Providence wherein he writes down who ſhall be preſerved, and this Book *Moſes* underſtands, *Exod.* 32. 33. *Whoſoever hath ſinned againſt me, him will I blot out of my Book*; not the Book of Election; no names written there are blotted out, but out of the Book of Providence. As it is underſtood, *Iſa.* 4. 3. [every one that is written among the living in *Jeruſalem*, [*i. e.* every one whom God deſigns to preſervation and deliverance. * That God, ſurely, that hath a care of the mean animals, will not be careleſs of his affectionate Worſhippers. He that feeds the Ravens, will not ſtarve his Doves. He that ſatisfies the Raven-

*Hortons *Serm.* Pſ. 87. p. 56.

ing

ing Wolf, will not famiſh his gentle Lambs and harmleſs Sheep. He ſhelters *Jacob* from *Labans* fury, and * tutors him how he ſhould carry himſelf towards the good man. He brought *Haman* out offavour, and ſet *Mordecai* in his place for the deliverance of the *Jews* which were deſign'd for ſlaughter,

* Gen. 31. 29.

2. *Over evil Angels and Men*, Gods power preſerves them, his patience ſuffers them, his wiſdom orders them and their evil purpoſes and performances to his own glory. The Devil cannot arreſt *Job*, nor touch a Lamb of his Flock, nor a hair of his head, without a commiſſion from God. He cannot enter into one filthy Swine in the *Gaderens* herd, without asking our Saviour leave. Whatever he doth, he hath a grant or permiſſion from Heaven for it. Gods ſpecial providence is over his people, but his general Providence over all Kingdoms and Countreys.

He takes care of *Syria*, as well as of *Judæa*, and ſends *Eliſha* to anoint *Hazael* King of *Syria*, as well as *Jehu* King of *Iſrael*. * Though *Iſhmael* had mocks for *Iſaac*, yet the God of *Iſaac* provided for the wants of *Iſhmael*. * *He cauſeth his Sun*

* 1 King. 19. 15.

* Gen. 25. 16, *to* 17, 18.

to ſhine upon the unjuſt as well as the *juſt*, to produce Fruits and plants for their preſervation.

II. *Over the meaneſt Creatures.* As the Suns light, ſo Gods Providence diſdains not the meaneſt wormes. 'Tis obſerved, that in the enumeration of the works of Creation, * only the great Whales and ſmall creeping things are mentioned, and not the intermediate Creatures, to ſhew that the leaſt as well as the greateſt are under his care. 'Tis one of his Titles to be the preſerver of Beaſts as well as *men.** He is the great Caterer for all Creatures. * *The young Lyons ſeek their meat from God.* They attend him for their daily portion, and what they gather and meet with in their purſuit, is Gods gift to them, *verſ.* 27, 28. He liſtens to the cries of the young Ravens, though they are Birds of Prey. *He gives to the Beaſt his food, and to the young Ravens which cry.* In *Pſalm* 104. *David* throughout the whole reads a particular Lecture of this Doctrine, wherein you may take a proſpect of Gods Providence all over the world. He acts them by a Commandment and imprinted Law upon their natures,

* *Gen.* 1. 21.

* Neh. 9. 6.

* Pſ. 104. 21.

* Pſal. 147. 9.

tures, and makes them observe exactly those statutes he enacts for the guidance of them in their proper operations. *Psal.* 147. 15. [*he sendeth forth his Commandment upon Earth, and his word runs very swiftly,*] *viz.* his word of Providence. God keeps them in the observation of their first ordinance. * They observe their stations, the Law God hath set them, as if they had a rational knowledge of their duty in their particular motions, *Ps.* 104. 19. *the Sun knoweth his going down.* Sometimes he makes them instruments of his Ministry to us; sometimes executioners of his judgments. Lice and Frogs arm themselves at his command to punish *Egypt.* He makes a Whale to attend *Jonas* dropping into the Sea, to be an instrument both to punish and preserve him; Yea, and which is more wonderfull, the multitude of the very Cattle is brought among others as a reason of a peoples preservation from destruction, *Jonah* 4. 11. the multitude of the Cattle are joyned with the multitude of the infants, as an argument to spare *Nineveh.* He remembers *Noah*'s Cattle as well as his Sons. *Gen.* 8. 1. God remembred *Noah* and every living thing, and all the Cattle that were

* Psal. 119. 91. *They continue this day according to thine Ordinances, for all are thy Servants.* i. e. *The Earth and what is upon it.*

were with him in the Ark. He numbers the very hairs of our heads, that not one falls without his Will. Not only the immortal Soul, but the decaying body; not only the vital parts of that body, but the inconsiderable hairs of the head, are under his care.

*A particular Act of remembrance is exercised by God for the very Cattle.

I. *This is no dishonour to God, to take care of the meanest Creatures.* 'Tis as honourable for his power to preserve them, and his Wisdom to govern them, as for both to create them. 'Tis one part of a mans righteousness to be merciful to his beast which he never made, and is it not a part of Gods righteousnes, as the Rector of the World, to take care of those Creatures which he did not disdain to give a being to?

II. *It rather conduceth to his honour.*

1. *The honour of his goodness.* It shews the comprehensiveness of his goodness which embraceth in the arms of his Providence, the lowest Worm as well as the highest Angel. Shall infinite goodness frame a thing, and make no provision for its subsistance? At the first Creation he acknowledged whatever he had created, good in his kind, good in themselves,

good

good in order to the end, for which he created them; 'tis therefore an honourable thing for his goodneſs to conduct them to that end, which in their Creation he deſign'd them for; and not leave them wild diſorders unſuitable to the end of that goodneſs which firſt called them into being. If he grow out of love with the operations of his hands, he would ſeem to grow out of love with his own goodneſs that formed them.

2. *The honour of his Power and Wiſdom.* The Power of God is as much ſeen in making an inſect full of life and ſpirit in all the parts of it, to perform all the actions ſuitable to its life and nature, as in making Creatures of a greater bulk, and is it not for the honour of his power to preſerve them, and the honour of his Wiſdom to direct theſe little animals to the end he intended in their Creation; for as little as they ſeem to be, an end they have, and glorious too, for *natura nihil facit fruſtra.* It ſeems not to conſiſt with his wiſdom to neglect that which he hath vouchſafed to Create. And though the Apoſtle ſeems to deny Gods care of Brutes. 1 *Cor.* 9. *Doth God take*

care

care for Oxen? 'Tis true God did not in that Law only take care of *Oxen*, *i. e.* with a legislative care, as making a Law only for them, though with a providential care he doth; but the Apostle there doth not deny Gods care for Oxen, but makes an argument *a minori ad majus.*

2. *Providence extends to all the actions and motions of the Creature.* Every *second* cause implies a dependance upon a *first* cause in its operation. If God did not extend his Providence over the actions of Creatures, he would not every where and in all things and beings be the first Cause.

1. *To natural actions,* What an orderly motion is there in the natural actions of Creatures which evidenceth a guidance by an higher reason, since they have none of their own? How do fish serve several coasts at several seasons, as if sent upon a particular message by God? This cannot be by any other faculty then the instinct their Maker hath put into them. Plants that grow between a barren and fruitful Soil, shoot all their roots towards the moist and fruitful ground; by what other cause then a secret direction of Providential Wisdom? * There is a Law impreſt

* Andrews *Catechistical Doctrine.* p. 60.

preſt upon them and their motions, that are ſo orderly, as if they were acted according to a Covenant and agreement between them and their Creator, and therefore called the *Covenant* of the *day* and *night*. * What avails the toyl and labour of man in plowing, trading, watching, unleſs God influence, unleſs he bleſs, unleſs he keep the City? The proceed of all things depends upon his goodneſs in bleſſing, and his power in preſerving. God ſignified this, when he gave the Law from Mount *Sinai*, promiſing the People, that if they kept his Commandments, he would give them rain in due ſeaſon, and that the Earth ſhould bring forth her Fruit. * Evidencing thereby, that thoſe natural cauſes can produce nothing without his bleſſing, that though they have natural principles to produce ſuch Fruits according to their natures, yet he can put a ſtop to their operations, and make all their Fruits abortive. He weighs the waters, how much ſhall be poured out in ſhowres of rain upon the parched Earth. He makes a decree for the rain, and gives the Clouds a Commiſſion to diſſolve themſelves ſo much and no more. * Yea, he

* Jer. 33. 20.

* Levit. 26. 3, 4. *Then will I give you rain, and the Land ſhall yield her increaſe, and the trees of the field ſhall yield their fruit.*

* Job, 28. 23 24, 25. 26.

he doth order the conduct of them by counsel, as imploying his wisdom about these things which are of concern to the World. *Job* 37. 11, 12. *He scattereth his bright Cloud, and it is turned round about by his Counsels, that they may do whatsoever he commands them upon the face of the World in the Earth.*

2. *To Civil actions.* Counsels of men are ordered by him to other ends then what they aim at, and which their Wisdom cannot discover. God stirred up *Senacherib* to be the Executioner of his justice upon the *Jews*, and afterwards upon the *Ægyptians*, when that great King designed only the satisfaction of his ambition in the enlarging his Kingdom and supporting his greatness. * *Isa.* 10. 6, 7. *I will send him against an Hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath, how be it he means not so, neither doth his heart think so,* [He designs not to be an instrument of my justice] *but it is in his heart to destroy and cut off Nations, not a few.* His thoughts and aims were far different from Gods thoughts. The hearts of Kings are in his hands, as wax in the hands of a man, which he can work into

into what form and ſhape he pleaſes. He hath the ſoveraignty over, and the ordering the hearts of Magiſtrates, *Pſal.* 47. 9. *the ſhields of the Earth belong unto God.* Counſels of men for the good of his people, are his act. The Princes adviſed *Jeremiah* and *Baruch. Jer.* 36. 19. to hide themſelves which they did, yet *ver.* 26. it is ſaid the Lord hid them. Though they followed the advice of their Court-friends, yet they could not have been ſecured, had not God ſtep't in by his providential care, and covered them with his hand. It was the Courtiers Counſel, but God challenges the honour of the ſucceſs.

Military actions are ordered by him. Marſhal emylopments are ordered by his providence. He is the great General of Armies: 'Tis obſerved that in the two Prophets, *Iſaiah* and *Jeremiah*, God is called the Lord of Hoſts no leſs then a Hundred and Thirty times. *

Arrow-ſmith *Chain of Princi-ples Exer-cit.* 1. §. 1.

3. *To preternatural actions.* God doth command Creatures to do thoſe things which are no way ſuitable to their inclinations and gives them ſometimes for his own ſervice a writt of eaſe from the per-

formance of the natural Law he hath impreſſed upon them. A devouring Raven is made by the Providence of God, the prophets Caterer in a time of Famine. * God inſtructs a ravenous Bird in a leſſon of abſtinence for *Eliah's* ſafety, and makes it both a Cook and a Serving man to the Prophet. The Whale that delights to play about the deepeſt part of the Ocean, approaches to the ſhore, and attends upon *Jonah* to tranſport him to the dry Land. * The fire was ſlacked by God, that it ſhould not ſinge the leaſt hair of the three Childrens heads, but was let looſe to conſume the Officers of the Court. The mouths of the ravenous Lyons which had been kept with an empty ſtomach, were muzled by God, that they ſhould not prey upon *Daniel* in a whole nights ſpace. God taught them an Heroical temperance with ſo dainty a diſh at their mouths, and yet they tore the accuſers in a trice.

1* King. 17. 4.

* Jonah 2. 10.

* Dan. 3.

4. *To all ſupernatural and miraculous actions* of the Creatures which are as ſo many new Creations. As when the Sun went backward in *Hezekiah's* time; when it ſtood ſtill in the valley of *Ajalon*, that

Joſhuah

Joſhuah might compleat his Victory on the *Canaanites*. The boyſterous waves ſtood on a heap like Walls to ſecure the *Iſraelites* paſſage, but returning to their natural motion, were the *Ægyptians* Sepulchre. When Creatures have ſtept out of their natural courſe, it could not be the act of the Creature, it being ſo much againſt and above their natures, but it muſt be by the order of ſome Superior Power.

5. *To all fortuitous actions.* What is caſual to us, is ordained by God; as effects ſtand related to the ſecond cauſe, they are many times contingent; but as they ſtand related to the firſt cauſe, they are acts of his Counſel, and directed by his Wiſdom. God never left ſecond cauſes to ſtraggle and operate in a Vagabond way; though the effect ſeem to us to be a looſe act of the Creature, yet it is directed by a Superior cauſe to a higher end then we can preſently imagine. The whole diſpoſing of the lot which is caſt into the lap, is from the Lord. * A Souldier ſhoots an arrow at random, and God guides it to be the Executioner of *Ahab* for his Sin; * which Death was foretold by

Pro. 16. 33.

* 1 King. 22. 34.

by *Micajah*, *v.* 17, 28, God gives us a certain Rule to judge of ſuch contingencies, *Exod.* 21.13. And *if a man lye not in wait, but God deliver him into his hand.* A man accidentally kills another, but it is done by a ſecret commiſſion from God. [*God delivered him into his hands.*] Providence is the great Clock, keeping time and order, not only hourly, but inſtantly to its own honour. *

* Fuller *Eccleſ. Hiſt. Cent.* 6. *book* 2. p. 51.

6. *To all voluntary actions.*

1. *To good actions.* Not by compelling, but ſweetly inclining, determining the Will, ſo that it doth that willingly, which by an unknown and unſeen neceſſity cannot be omitted. It conſtrains not a man to good againſt his will, but powerfully moves the will to do that by conſent, which God hath determined ſhall be done. *The way of man is not in himſelf,* the motion is mans, the action is mans, but the direction of his ſteps is from God. *Jer.* 10.23. *'Tis not in man that walketh, to direct his ſteps.*

2. *To evil actions.*

1. *In permitting them to be done.* Idolatries and follies of the Heathen were permitted by God. He checked them not

not in their courſe, but laid the reins upon their necks, and ſuffered them to run what race they pleaſed, *Acts* 14. 16. *Who in times paſt ſuffered all nations to walk in their own wayes.* Not the moſt execrable villany that ever was committed in the world, could have been done without his permiſſion. Sin is not *amabile propter ſe*, and therefore the permiſſion of it is not deſireable in itſelf, but the permiſſion of it is only deſireable and *honeſtatur ex fine.* God is good and wiſe and righteous in all his acts; ſo likewiſe in this act of permitting ſin: and therefore he wills it out of ſome good and righteous end, which belongs to the manifeſtation of his glory, which is *that* he intends in all the acts of his will; of which this is one. Wicked men are ſaid to be a ſtaff in Gods hand, as a man manages a ſtaff which is in his own power, ſo doth God manage wicked men for his own holy purpoſes, and they can go no further then God gives them licence.

2. *In ordering them.* God governs them by his own unſearchable Wiſdom and Goodneſs, and directs them to the beſt and holieſt ends. Contrary to the

natures of the ſins, and the intentions of of the ſinner. *Joſeph*'s Brothers ſold him to gratifie their revenge, and God ordered it for their preſervation in a time of famine. *Pharaoh*'s hardneſs is ordered by God for his own glory, and that Kings deſtruction: God decrees the delivering up Chriſt to Death, and *Herod*, *Pilate*, the Phariſees and common rout of People in ſatisfying their own paſſion, do but execute what God had before ordained. *Act.* 4. 28. *for to do whatſoever thy hand and thy Counſel determined before to be done.* *Judas* his Covetouſneſs and the Devils malice are ordered by God to execute his decree for the redemption of the World. *Titus* the Emperour, his ambition led him to *Jeruſalem*, but Gods end is the fulfilling of his threatnings, and the taking revenge upon the *Jews* for their murdering of Chriſt. The aim of the Phyſician is the Patients health, when the intent of the Leeches is only to ſuck the blood. God hath holy ends in permitting ſin, while man hath unworthy ends in committing it. The rain which makes the Earth fruitful is exhaled out of the Salt-waters, which would of themſelves

ſpoil

ſpoil the ground and make it unfruitful. *The deceiver and the deceived* are his, *Joh.* 12. 16. Both the action of the Devil the Seducer, and of wicked men the ſeduced are reſtrained by God within due bounds, in ſubſerviency to his righteous will. [*for with him is ſtrength and wiſdom.*]

2. *As Providence is univerſal, ſo it is myſterious.* Who can trace the motions of Gods eyes in their race? He makes the *Clouds his Chariot* in his motions about the Earth, and his throne is in the dark. He walks upon the wings of the wind, His providential ſpeed makes it too quick for our underſtanding. His wayes are myſterious, and put the reaſon and wiſdom of men to a ſtand. The cleareſt ſighted Servants of God do not ſee the bottom of his works, the motion of Gods eyes is too quick for ours. *Second Propoſition*

John Baptiſt is ſo aſtoniſht at the ſtrange condeſcention of his Saviour to be baptiſed of him, that he forbids it; Man is a weak Creature, and can not trace or ſent out the wiſdom of God. * Pſal. 104. 3. ** Mat. 3. 14.

But this myſterioufneſs and darkneſs of Providence adds a luſtre to it. As ſtones ſet in Ebony, though the grounds be

be dark, make the beauty and ſparkling the clearer.

1. *His wayes are above humane methods.* Dark Providences are often the groundwork of ſome excellent piece he is about to diſcover to the world. His methods are like a plaited Picture, which on the one ſide repreſents a Negro, on the other a Beauty. He lets *Sarahs* womb be dead, and then brings out the root of a numerous progeny. He makes *Jacob* a Cripple, and then a Prince to prevail with God; He gives him a wound, and then a bleſſing. He ſends not the Goſpel till reaſon was nonpluſt, and that the world in that higheſt wiſdom it had at that time attained unto, was not able to arrive to the knowledge of God. 1 *Cor.* 1. 21. *After that the World by Wiſdom knew not God, it pleaſed God by the foolißneſs of preaching to ſave them that believe.*

2. *His ends are of a higher ſtrain then the aims of men,* who would have thought that the forces *Cyrus* raiſed againſt *Babylon* to ſatisfie his own ambition, ſhould be a means to deliver the *Iſralites* and reſtore the Worſhip of God in the Temple? God had this end, which *Iſaiah* prophecyed

prophecyed of, and *Cyurs* never dreamt of, *Isa.* 44. 28. *That saith of* Cyrus, *thou art my Shepherd and shalt perform all my pleasure, even saying that* Jerusalem *shall be built*, &c.* And this a long time before *Cyrus* was born: *Pharaoh* sent *Israel* away in the very night, at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, the time perfixt by God he could not keep them longer becaufe Gods promife, he would not becaufe of Gods Plagues. God aims at the glorifying his truth, in keeping touch with his word. *Pharaoh* defigns not the accompliſhing Gods will, but his deliverance from Gods judgements. * Isa. 45. 1.

There is an obſervable conſideration to this purpoſe, how Gods ends are far different from mans. *Luke* 2. 1, 4. In the taxing the whole World by *Auguſtus*. *Auguſtus* out of pride to ſee what a numerous people he was Prince of, would tax the whole world: Some tell us he had appointed the enrolling the whole *Empire* Twenty Seven years before the Birth of our Saviour, and had proclaimed it at *Tarracon* in *Spain*: But ſoon after this proclamation, *Auguſtus* found a breaking out of ſome ſtirrs, and thereupon

on deferred his resolution to some other fit time, which was the very time of the birth of Christ. See now Gods wise disposal of things, in changing *Augustus*'s resolution, and deferring it till the Forty Fourth year of his Reign, when Christ was ready to come into the World! And this by giving occasion, yea, necessitating *Mary* to come from *Nazareth*, where *Joseph* and *Mary* dwelt, who perhaps being big with Chid, without this necessity laid upon her by the Emperors edict, would not have ventured upon the Journey to *Bethlehem*: there she falls in travell, that so Christ the seed of *David* being conceived in *Nazareth* should be born at *Bethlem*, where *Jesse* lived and *David* was born. How wisely doth God order the ambition and pride of men to fulfil his own predictions, and to publish the truth of Christs birth of the seed of *David*, for the names of *Joseph* and *Mary* were found in the Records of *Rome* in *Tertullians* time?

3. *God hath several ends in the same action.* *Jacob* is oppresst with Famine, *Pharaoh* enricht with plenty, but *Joseph's* imprisonment is in order to his Fa-

thers

Fathers relief, and *Pharaohs* wealth; his Miſtreſſes anger flings him into a Priſon. *Joſeph* is wronged, and hath Captivity for a reward of his chaſtity. God makes it a ſtep to his advancement, and by this way brings him from a Captive to be a favourite. What is Gods end? Not only to preſerve the *Ægyptian* Nation, but old *Jacob* and his *Family*. Was this all that God aimed at? No, He hath a further deſign, and lays the Foundation of ſomething to be acted in the future age. By this means *Jacob* is brought into *Ægypt*, leaves his poſterity there, makes way for that glory in the working of the future miracles for their deliverance, ſuch an action that the world ſhould continually ring of, and which ſhould be a type of the ſpiritual deliverance by Chriſt.

4. *God has more remote ends then ſhort ſighted Souls are able to eſpy.* God doth not eye the preſent advantage of himſelf and his Creature, but hath an eye to his own glory in all, yea, in the very laſt ages of the world. In ſmall things, there are often great deſigns laid by God, and myſteries in the leaſt of his acts. *Iſaack* was delivered from his Fathers Sword, when

when he was intentionally dead, to ſet forth to the World a type of Chriſts reſurrection, and a Ram is conducted thither by God, and entangled in the thickets, and appointed to ſacrifice, whereby God ſets forth a type of Chriſts death. * He uſeth the captivities of the People to enlarge the bounds of the Goſpel.

* *Halls Contempl.* P. 796.

The wiſe men were guided by a Star to Chriſt as King of the *Jews*, and come to pay homage to him in his infancy; when was the foundation of this remarkable event laid? Probably in *Balaams* prophecy (24. *Numb.* 17. *I ſhall ſee him, but not now, I ſhall behold him, but not nigh. There ſhall come a Star out of* Jacob, *and a Scepter ſhall riſe out of* Iſrael, &c.) tranſmitted by tradition to thoſe Wiſe men, and perhaps renewed by *Sibylla Chaldæa*, and confirm'd in their minds by the *Jews*, whilſt in the *Babyloniſh* captivity they converſed with them. Thus God many ages before in this prophecy had an end in promoting the readier entertainment of Chriſt among this people, when he ſhould be born; what the wiſe mens end was, the Scripture doth not acquaint us, but however, there gifts were a means to

preſerve

preſerve our Saviour, *Joſeph* and *Mary* from the rage of a Tyrant, and affording them wherewithal to ſupport them in *Ægypt*, whether they were ordered by God to fly for ſecurity. So * God threatens by the Prophet the Noble man for his ſcoffing unbelief, that though he ſhould ſee the plenty, that he ſhould not taſte of it. See how God doth order Second cauſes, naturally to bring about his own decree! The King gives this perſon charge of the gate; whilſt the People croud for proviſion to ſatisfie their hunger, they accompliſh the threatning which they had no intentions to do and trod him to death. Now I come to ſhew, That there is a Providence,

*2 King. 7.1,2,17.

1. *The wiſdom of God would not be ſo perſpicuous were there not a providence in the World.* 'Tis eminent in the Creation, but more illuſtrious in the Government of the Creatures. A muſician diſcovers more skill in the touching an inſtrument and ordering the ſtrings, to ſound what notes he pleaſeth, then he doth in the firſt framing and making of it. * All Gods providences are but his touch of the ſtrings of this great inſtrument of the World. And

* Iſa. 28. 29. *This alſo comes from the Lord of Hoſts· which is wonderful in Counſil and excellent in working.*

And all his works are excellent, becauſe they are the fruit of his wonderful counſel and unſearchable wiſdom, which is moſt ſeen in his providence, as in reading the verſes before. His power is glorified in creating and upholding this Fabrick: How ſhall his wiſdom be gloryfied but in his government of it? Surely God will be no leſs intent upon the honour of his wiſdom, then upon that of his power. For if any attribute may be ſaid to excell another, it is his wiſdom and holineſs, becauſe thoſe are perfections which God hath ſtampt upon the nobler part of his Creation. Inferiour Creatures have more power and ſtrength then man, but Wiſdom is the perfection of a rational Creature. Now it is Gods Wiſdom to direct all things to their proper end as well as to appoint them their ends which direction muſt be by a particular providence, eſpecially in thoſe things which know not their end, and have no reaſon to guide them; We know in the World it is not a part of Wiſdom to leave things to chance, but to ſtate our ends, and lay a platform of thoſe means which direct to an attaining of them. And Wiſdom is

moſt

moſt ſeen in drawing all things together, and making them ſubſervient to the end, he hath fixed to himſelf; and therefore one of the great things that ſhall be admired at laſt, next to the great work of redemption, will be the harmony and concent of thoſe things which ſeemed contrary, how they did all conſpire for the bringing about that end which God aimed at.

2. *The means whereby God acts, diſcover a providence,* He acts *Secondly.*

1. *By ſmall means.* The conſiderable actions in the World have uſually very ſmall beginnings. As of a few letters, how many Thouſand words are made, of Ten figures, how many Thouſand Numbers? And a point is the beginning of all Geometry. A little ſtone flung into a pond, makes a little circle, then a greater, till it inlargeth it ſelf to both the ſides. So from ſmall beginnings, God doth cauſe an efflux through the whole World.

1. *He uſeth ſmall means in his ordinary works.* The common works of nature ſpring from ſmall beginnings. Great Plants are formed from ſmall ſeeds. The

Clouds which water the great Garden of the World, are but a Collection of Vapours. The noblest operations of the Soul are wrought in an Organ, *viz.* the Brain, composed of coagulated Phlegm. Who would imagine that *Saul* in seeking his Fathers Asses, should find a Kingdom?

2. *In his extraordinary works he useth small means.* *Elisha* that waited upon *Elijah*, and poured water upon his hands, shall do greater miracles then his Master. And the Apostles shall do greater works then Christ; * that the world may know that God is not tyed to any means that men count excellent, that all Creatures are his, and act not of themselves, but by his Spirit and power.

* *John.* 14. 12.

In his extraordinary works of *Justice.* He makes a Rod in the hand of *Moses* to confound the skill of the *Ægyptian* Magicians: He commissioned Froggs and Flyes to countercheck a powerful and mighty people; When *Benhadad* was so proud as to say, the dust of *Samaria* should not suffice for handfuls for his Army, God scattered his army by the Lacquies of the Princes * about two hundred thirty two *v.* 15. The little sling in the hand of *David*

* 1 *King* 20. 14. *The young men of the Princes of the Provinces.*

vid a youth, guided by Gods eye and hand, is a match fit enough for a blaſphemous Gyant, and defeats the ſtrength of a Weavers beam.

In his extraordinary works of *mercy*.

1. *In the deliverance of a people or perſon.* A dream was the occaſion of *Joſephs* greatneſs and *Joſephs* preſervation. He uſed the Cacklings of Geeſe to ſave the *Roman* Capitol from a ſurprize by the *Gauls*. He picks out *Gideon* to be a General, who was leaſt in his Fathers eſteem; * and what did his army conſiſt of, but few, and thoſe fearful; * thoſe that took water with their hands, (which as *Joſephus* ſaith, is a natural ſign of fear) did God chooſe out to overthrow the *Midianites*, who had over-ſpread the Land as Graſſhoppers, to ſhew that he can make the moſt fearful men to be ſufficient inſtruments againſt the greateſt powers, when the concernments of his Church and People lye at ſtake.

* *Judg.* 6. 15.
* *Judg.* 7. 6, 7.

God ſo delights in thus baffling the pride of men, that *Aſa* uſes it as an argument to move God to deliver him in the ſtrait he was in, when *Zerah* the *Æthiopian* came againſt him with a great multi-

tude, when he was but a ſmall point and center in the midſt of a wide circumference. * Hereby God ſets off his own power, and evidenceth his ſuperintendent care of his People. It was more ſignally the arm of God for *Moſes* to confound *Pharaoh* with his Lice and Frogs, then if he had beaten him in a plain field with his Six Hundred Thouſand *Iſraelites*.

* 2 Chron. 14. 11. *Lord, it is nothing with thee to help with many or with few.*

2. *In the Salvation of the Soul.* Our Saviour himſelf, though God the great redeemer of the World, was ſo mean in the eyes of the World, that he calls himſelf a *worm*, and *no man*. * He picks out many times the moſt vnlikely perſons to accompliſh the greateſt purpoſes for mens Souls. He lodgeth the Treaſures of Wiſdom in Veſſels of Earth; He choſe not the Cedars of *Lebanon*, but the Shrubbs of the valley, not the learned Phariſees of *Jeruſalem*, but the poor men of *Galilee*, *out of the mouthes of Babes and Sucklings, he ordains praiſe to himſelf.*

* *Pſal.* 22. 6.

The Apoſtles breeding was not capable of ennobling their minds, and fitting them for ſuch great actions as Chriſt employed them in. But after he had newmoulded and enflamed, their Spirits he made

made them of Fiſhermen, greater conquerors of the World, then the moſt magnified Grandees could pretend to.

Thus Salvation is wrought by a crucified Chriſt, and that God who made the world by wiſdom, would ſave it by the fooliſhneſs of preaching, And make *Paul*, the leaſt of the Apoſtles as he terms himſelf, more ſucceſful then thoſe who had been inſtructed at the feet of Chriſt. * * 2 Cor. 15. 9, 10.

2. *By contrary means.* God by his Providence makes contrary things contribute to his glory, as contrary Colours in a picture do to the beauty of the piece. Nature is Gods inſtrument to do whatſoever he pleaſes, and therefore nothing ſo contrary, but he may bring to his own ends. As in ſome Engines you ſhall ſee wheels have contrary motions, and yet all in order to one and the ſame end. God cured thoſe by a Brazen Serpent, which were ſtung by the fiery ones, whereas Braſs is naturally hurtful to thoſe that are bit by Serpents. *

* Grotius. *Mat.* 20. 16. *Æs naturaliter nocet τοῖς ὄφεσι. Sixtus.*

1. *Afflictions.* *Joſeph* is ſold for a ſlave, and God ſends him as a Harbinger; his Brothers ſold him to deſtroy him, and God ſends him to ſave them.

Pauls Bonds in the opinion of ſome might have ſtiffled the Goſpel, but he tells us, that they had fallen out to the furtherance of the Goſpel, 1 *Phil.* 12.

* Hall *contempl. book* 3. p. 806, 807.

2. *Sins.* * God doth often effect his juſt *Will* by our weakneſs, neither thereby juſtifying our infirmities, nor blemiſhing his own action: *Jacob* gets the bleſſing by unlawful means, telling no leſs then two lies to attain it; [I am *Eſau*, and this is veniſon] But hereby God brings about the performance of his promiſe, which *Iſaac's* natural affection to *Eſau* would have hindred *Jacob* of.

The breach of the firſt Covenant was an occaſion of introducing a better. Mans ſinning away his firſt ſtock, was an occaſion to God to enrich him with a ſurer. The loſs of his original righteouſneſs made way for a clearer and more durable. The folly of man made way for the evidence of Gods wiſdom, and the ſin of man for the manifeſtation of his grace; and by the wiſe diſpoſal of God, opens a way for the honour of thoſe attributes, which would not elſe have been experimentally known by the Sons of men.

3. *Caſual*

3. *Caſual means.* The Viper which leapt upon *Pauls* hand out of the bundle of ſticks, was a caſual act, but deſigned by the providence of God for the propagation of the Goſpel. *Pharaoh's* Daughter comes caſually to waſh her ſelf in the river, but indeed conducted by the ſecret influence of God upon her, to reſcue *Moſes* expoſed to a forlorn condition, and breed him up in the *Ægyptian* learning, that he might be the fitter to be his kindreds deliverer. *Saul* had been hunting *David*, and at laſt had lodged him in a place whence he could not well eſcape, and being ready to ſeize upon him in that very inſtant of time, a Poſt comes to *Saul* and brings the news that the *Philiſtines* had invaded the Land, which cut out other work for him, and *David* for that time eſcapes. * * 1 *Sam.* 23. 26, 27, 28.

Thirdly.

3. Reaſon. *Such actions and events of things are in the world, which cannot rationally be aſcribed to any other cauſe then a ſupreme providence.* 'Tis ſo in common things. Men have the ſame parts, the ſame outward advantages, the ſame induſtry, and yet proſper not alike. One labours much and gets little, another u-

ſes not altogether ſuch endeavours, and hath riches flowing in upon him. Men lay their projects deep, and queſtion not the accompliſhment of them, and are diſappointed by ſome ſtrange and unforeſeen accident. And ſometimes men attain what they deſire in a different way, and many times contrary to the Method they had projected. This is evidenced,

1. *By the reſtraints upon the paſſions of men:* the waves of the Sea, and the tumults of the People are much of the ſame impetuous natures, and are quelled by the ſame power. * Tumults of the People could no more be ſtilled by the force of a man, then the Waves of the Sea by a puff of breath. How ſtrangely did God qualify the hearts of the *Ægyptians* willingly to ſubmit to the ſale of their Land, when they might have riſen in a tumult, broke open the Granaries, and ſupplied their wants. * Indeed, if the World were left to the conduct of chance and fortune, what work would the ſavage luſts and paſſions of men make among us? How is it poſſible that any but an Almighty power can temper ſo many

* *Pſal.* 65. 7. *which ſtilleth the noiſe of the Sea, and tumult of the People.*

* *Gen.* 47. 19, 21.

many jarring Principles and rank ſo many quarrelſom and turbulent Spirits in a due order? If thoſe bruitiſh paſſions which boyl in the hearts of men, were let looſe by that infinite power that bridles them, how ſoon would the World be run headlong into unconceivable confuſions and be rent in pieces by its own diſorders?

2. *By the ſudden changes which are made upon the Spirits of men for the preſervation of others.* God takes off the Spirit of ſome as he did the wheels from the *Egyptian* Chariots, in the very act of their rage. *Paul* was ſtruck down, and changed while he was yet breathing out threatnings, *&c.* God ſees all the workings of mens hearts, all thoſe cruel intentions in *Eſau* againſt his Brother *Jacob*, but God on a ſudden turns away that torrent of hatred, and diſpoſeth *Eſau* for a friendly meeting. * And he who had before an exaſperated malice by reaſon of the loſs of his birth-right and bleſſing, was in a moment a changed man. Thus was *Sauls* heart changed towards *David*, and from a Perſecutor, turns a juſtifier of him, confeſſeth *Davids* innocence, and

* Gen. 33. 4.

and his own guilt, 1 *Sam*, 24. 17, 18. *thou art more righteous then I, for thou haſt rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil*, &c. What reaſon can be rendred for ſo ſudden a change in *Saul's* revengeful Spirit, which had all the force of intereſt to ſupport it, and conſidered by him at that very time? For *verſ.* 24, he takes ſpecial notice that his Family ſhould be diſinherited, and *David* be his Succeſſor in the Throne. How ſuddenly did God turn the Edge of the Sword, and the heart of an Enemy from *Jehoſaphat*. 2 *Chron.* 18. 31. *Jehoſaphat* cried out, and the Lord helped him, and God moved them to depart from him. The holy Ghoſt emphatically aſcribes it to Gods motion of their wills, by twice expreſſing it: But ſtranger is the preſervation of the *Jews* from *Hamans* bloody deſigns, after the decree was gone out againſt them. *Mordecai* the *Jew* is made *Ahaſuerus's* Favourite by a ſtrange wheeling of Providence: Firſt, The Kings Eyes are held waking, and he is inclined to paſs away the ſolitarineſs of the night with a Book rather then a game, or ſome other Court paſt-time; no book did he fix

fix on but the Records of that Empire, no place in that voluminous book, but the Chronicle of *Mordecai*'s ſervice* in the diſcovery of a treaſon againſt the Kings life; he doth not careleſly paſs it over, but enquires what recompence had been beſtowed on *Mordecai* for ſo conſiderable a ſervice, and this juſt before *Mordecai* ſhould have been deſtroyed; had *Ahaſuerus* ſlept, *Mordecai* and all his Countrey-men had been ſacrificed notwithſtanding all his Loyalty. Could this be a caſt of blind chance which had ſuch a concatenation of Evidences in it for a ſuperior power?

* *Eſther* 6. 1, 2.

3. *In cauſing Enemies to do things for others, which are contrary to all rules of policy.* 'Tis wonderful, that the *Jews*, a People known to be of a ſtubborn nature, and tenacious of their Laws wherein they differed from all the nations, ſhould in the worſt of their captivities be ſo often befriended by their Conquerors, not only to rebuild their City and reedify their Temple, but at the charge of their Conquerors too. The very Enemies that had captived the *Jews*, though they knew them to be a People apt to rebell:

bell: That the People whoſe Temple they helped to build, would keep up a diſtinct worſhip and difference in Religion, which is uſually attended with the greateſt animoſities. And when they knew it to be ſo ſtrong in ſcituation as to be a fort as well as a place of Worſhip. That for this, their Enemies ſhould furniſh them with materials, when they were not in a condition to procure any for themſelves, and give them money out of the publick Exchecquer, and timber out of the Kings Forreſt, as we read. * And all this they lookt upon as the hand of God. *Ezra* 6. 22. [*The Lord had turned the heart of the King of Aſſyria unto them, to ſtrengthen their hands in the work of the houſe of God.* And the Heathen *Artaxerxes* takes notice of it. *Cicero* tells us, that in his time Gold was carried out of *Italy* for the ornament of the Temple. They had their rites in Religion preſerved intire under the *Roman* Government, though more different from the *Roman* cuſtomes then any Nation ſubdued by them. *Dion* and *Seneca* and others obſerve, that where ever they were tranſplanted, they proſper'd and gave Laws

* *Ezra* 1. 1, 2, 4, 7. *Ezra* 4. 12, 15, 19 *Ezra* 6. 4, 5, 8, 9, 11. 2 *Nehem.* 8.

to

to the victors. And this was ſo generally acknowledged, that *Hamans* Cabinet counſel (who were ſurely none of the meaneſt States men,) gave him no hopes of ſucceſs, when he appeared againſt *Mordecai*, becauſe he was of the race of the *Jews*,* ſo much did God own them by his gracious Providence: They were alſo ſo intire in all their Captivities before their crucifying of our Lord and Saviour, that they count their genealogies. * Eſth. 6: 13.

4. *In infatuating the Counſels of men.* God ſets a ſtamp of folly upon the Wiſdom of men, *Iſa.* 44: 25. *that turns the wiſe men backward, and makes their knowledge fooliſhneſs. And makes their Counſels as Chaff and Stubble.* Iſaiah 33. 11. [*ye ſhall conceive chaff, and ſhall bring forth ſtubble. Herod* was a crafty perſon, in ſo much that Chriſt calls him Fox. How fooliſh was he in managing his project of deſtroying Chriſt, his ſuppoſed competitor in the Kingdom, when the wiſe men came to *Jeruſalem*, and brought the news of the birth of a King of the *Jews*? He calls a *Synod* of the ableſt men among the *Jews*. The reſult of it is to manifeſt the truth of Gods prediction in the place of

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our Saviours birth, and to direct the wiſe men in their way to him. *Herod* had no reſolutions, but bloody, concerning Chriſt. * God blinds his mind in the midſt of all his craft, that he ſees not thoſe rational waies, which he might make uſe of for the deſtruction of that which he feared; he ſends thoſe wiſe men meer ſtrangers to him, and intruſts them with ſo great a concern; he goes not himſelf, nor ſends any of his guard with them to cut him off immmediately upon the diſcovery, but leaves the whole conduct of the buſineſs to thoſe he had no acquaintance with, and of whoſe faithfulneſs he could have no aſſurance. God croſſes the intentions of men. *Joab* ſlew *Amaſa*, becauſe he thought him his rival in *Davids* favour, and then imagined he had rid his hands of all that could ſtand in his way; yet God raiſed up *Benajah*, who drew *Joab* from the horns of the *Altar*, and cut him in pieces at *Solomons* command. God doth ſo order it many times, that when the moſt rational Counſel is given to men, they have not hearts to follow it. *Achitophel* gave as ſutable Counſel for *Abſaloms* deſign, as the beſt States-

* *Mat.* 2. 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8.

man

man in the World could give. * To ſur- * 2 Sam. 17. 1, 2.
prize *David* while he was amuz'd at his Sons rebellion, and dejected with grief at ſo unnatural an action, and whilſt his forces had not yet made their Randezvouz, and thoſe that were with him were tired in their march. Speed was beſt in attempts of this nature. *David* in all probability had been cut off, and the hearts of the People would have melted at the fall of their Soveraign. But *Abſalom* inclines rather to *Huſhaies* Counſel which was not ſo proper for the buſineſs he had engaged in, *v.* the 7*th*, to *v.* 14. Now this was from God. *For the Lord had appointed to defeat the good Counſel of Ahithophel to the intent that the Lord might bring evil upon Abſalom.* So fooliſh were the *Egyptians* againſt reaſon, in entring into the Red Sea after the *Iſraelites*; for could they poſſibly think that that God who had by a ſtrong hand, and an Army of Prodigies brought *Iſrael* out of their Captivity, and conducted them thus far, and now by a miracle opened the Red Sea, and gave them paſſage through the bowels of it, ſhould give their Enemies the ſame ſecurity in purſuing them, and

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unravel all that web he had been ſo long a working.

5. *In making the Counſels of men ſubſervient to the very ends they deſign againſt.* God brings a Cloud upon mens underſtandings, and makes them the contrivers of their own ruin, wherein they intend their own ſafety, and gains honour to himſelf by outwitting the Creature. The *Babel* projectors fearing to be ſcattered abroad, would erect a power to prevent, and this proved the occaſion of diſperſing them over the World in ſuch a confuſion, that they could not underſtand one another. * God ordered *Pharaohs* policies to accompliſh the end againſt which they were directed; He is afraid *Iſrael* ſhould grow too mighty, and ſo wreſt the Kingdom out of his hands, and therefore he would oppreſs them to hinder their increaſe, which made them both ſtronger, and more numerous. [Exerciſe ſtrengthens men, and luxurie ſoftens the Spirit.] The *Jews* fear, if they ſuffered Chriſt to make a farther progreſs in his Doctrine and miracles, they ſhould loſe *Cæſars* favour, and expoſe their Countrey as a prey to a *Roman* Army; this cauſed their deſtructi-

* *Gen.* 11. 4, 8.

deſtruction by thoſe Enemies they thought by this means to prevent: God ordering it ſo, that a *Roman* army was poured in upon them, which ſwept them into all corners of the Earth. Prieſts and Phariſees ſit cloſe together in Counſel, how to hinder mens believing in Chriſt, and the reſult of their conſultation was to put him to death, and no man then would believe in a dead perſon, not capable of working any miracles, * for the amuſing of the People, and by this means there were a greater number of believers on him, then in the time of his life, according to his own prediction, *Joh.* 12.32. *and I if I be lifted up from the Earth, will draw all men unto me.* * *Joh.* 11. 47, 48, 49, 50.

6. *In making the fancies of men ſubſervient to their own ruine.* God brings about ſtrange events by the meer imaginations and conceits of men, which are contrary to common and natural obſervation, and the ordinary courſe of rational conſequences. * The Army of the *Moabites* which had invaded *Iſrael*, thought ; the two Kings of *Judah* and *Iſrael* had turned their Swords againſt one another, becauſe the riſing Sun had coloured thoſe unex- * 2 *Kings* 3.22, 23.

pected waters, and made them look red, which they took for the blood of their Enemies, and ſo diſorderly run without examination of the truth of their conceit; but inſtead of dividing the ſpoil, they left their lives upon the points of the *Iſraelites* ſwords. So the *Syrian* Army are ſcared with a panick fear, and ſcatter themſelves upon an empty ſound. * Thus a dream ſtruck a terror into the *Midianites*, and the noiſe of broken pot-ſheards made them fear ſome treaſon in their Camp, and cauſed them to turn their ſwords into one anothers bowels, *Judg*, 7. 19, 22, *The Lord ſet every mans ſword againſt his fellow.*

* 2 *King.* 7. 6.

Queſt. Firſt *Queſtion.* If Gods providence orders all things in the world, and concurrs to every thing, *how will you free God from being the Author of ſin?*

Anſw. Anſwer in ſeveral propoſitions.

* *Pſal.* 105. 17. *He ſent a man before them, even* Joſeph, *who was ſold for a Servant.*

1. *'Tis certain, God hath a hand about all the ſinful actions in the World.* The ſelling *Joſeph* to the *Iſhmaelites*, was the act of his Brethren; The ſending him into *Egypt*, was the act of God, * *Gen.* 45. 8. *It*

8. *It was not you that ſent me hither, but God.* Where *Joſeph* aſcribes it more to God then to them. Their wicked intention was to be rid of him, that he might tell no more tales of them to his Father: Gods gracious intention was to advance him for his honour and their good, and to bring about this gracious purpoſe, he makes uſe of their ſinful practice. Gods end was righteous, when theirs was wicked. 'Tis ſaid, God moved *David* to number the People. 2 *Sam.* 24. 1. *the anger of the* Lord *was kindled again Iſrael, and he moved David againſt them to ſay, Go number Iſrael and Judah.* Yet Satan is ſaid to provoke *David* to number the people. 1 Chron. 21. 1. *And Satan ſtood up againſt Iſrael, and provoked David to number Iſrael.* Here are two agents; But the text mentions Gods hand in it out of Juſtice to puniſh *Iſrael*; Satans end, no queſtion, was out of malice to deſtroy. Satan wills it as a ſin. God as a puniſhment. God, ſay ſome, *permiſſive*, Satan *Efficaciter.* In the moſt villanous and unrighteous action that ever was done, God is ſaid to have an influence on it.

God is ſaid to deliver up Chriſt, *Act.* 2. 23. *Him, being delivered by the determinate Counſel and foreknowledge of* God, *ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and ſlain.* Acts 4. 28. *for to do whatſoever thy hand and thy Counſel determined before to be done.* Not barely as an act of his preſcience, but his Counſel, and that determinate, *i. e.* ſtable and irreverſible. He makes a diſtinction between thoſe two acts. In God it was an act of Counſel, in them an act of wickedneſs [*by wicked hands*;] there was Gods Counſel about it, an actual tradition. *Rom.* 8. 32. *He that ſpared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all.* All the Agents had ſeveral ends. God in that act aimed at the redemption of the world; Satan at the preventing it; *Judas* to ſatisfie his covetouſneſs; the *Jews* to preſerve themſelves from the *Roman* invaſion, and out of malice to him for ſo ſharply reproving them. God had a gracious principle of love to mankind, and acted for the Salvation of the World in it; the inſtruments had baſe principles and ends, and moved freely in obedience to them. So in the affliction of *Job*, both

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God and Satan had an hand in it. *Job.* 1. 12. *The Lord ſaid unto Satan, behold, all that he hath is in thy power. verſ.* 11. *Touch all that he hath, and he will curſe thee to thy face*; their ends were different, the one righteous for Tryal, the other malicious againſt God, that he might be curſed, and againſt *Job* that he might be damned. Gods end was the brightning of his grace, and the Devils end was the ruin of his integrity and diſpoilng him of Gods favour.

2. *In all Gods acts about ſin, there is no ſtain to Gods holineſs.* * In ſecond cauſes, one and the ſame action proceeding from divers cauſes, in reſpect of one cauſe, may be ſinful; in reſpect of the other, righteous. As when two Judges condemn a guilty perſon, one condemns him out of love to juſtice, becauſe he is guilty; the other condemns him out of a private hatred and ſpleen: One reſpects him as a Malefactor only, the other as a private Enemy chiefly. Here is the ſame action with two concurring cauſes, one being wicked in it, the other righteous. Much more may we conceive it in the concurrence of the Creator, with

* *Senguer. Metaph. lib. 2 cap 15. §. 5.*

the action of the Creature.

1. *God moves every thing in his ordinary providence according to their particular natures.* God moves every thing ordinarily according to the nature he finds it in. Had we ſtood in innocency, we had been moved according to that originally righteous nature, but ſince our Fall we are moved according to that nature introduced by us with the expulſion of the other. Our firſt corruption was our own act, not Gods work, we owe our Creation to God, our corruption to our ſelves. Now, ſince God will govern his Creature, I do not ſee how it can be otherwiſe, then according to the preſent nature of the Creature, unleſs God be pleaſed to alter that nature. God forces no man againſt his nature; he doth not force the will in converſion, but graciouſly and powerfully inclines it. He doth never force nor incline the will to ſin, but leaves it to the corrupt habits it hath ſettled in it ſelf. *Pſal.* 81. 12. *So I gave them up to their own hearts luſts, and they walked in their own Counſels*; Counſels of their own framing, not of Gods. He moves the will which is *ſponte mala*, according

according to its own nature and Counſels. As a man flings ſeveral things out of his hand, which are of ſeveral figures, ſome ſpherical, tetragons, cylinders, conicks, ſome round and ſome ſquare; though the motion be from the agent, yet the variety of their motions is from their own figure and frame; and if any will hold his hand upon a ball in its motion, regularly it will move according to his nature and figure, and a man by caſting a boul out of his hand is the cauſe of the motion, but the bad biaſs is the cauſe of its irregular motion. The power of action is from God, but the viciouſneſs of that action from our own nature. As when a Clock or Watch hath ſome fault in any of the wheels, the man that winds it up, or putting his hand upon the wheeles moves them, he is the cauſe of the motion, but it is the flaw in it, or deficiency of ſomething is the cauſe of its erroneous motion; that error was not from the perſon that made it, or the perſon that winds it up, and ſets it on going, but from ſome other cauſe; yet till it be mended it will not go otherwiſe, ſo long as it is ſet upon motion. Our moti-

on is from God. [Acts 17. 28. *in him we move*] but not the diſorder of that motion. 'Tis the foulneſs of a mans ſtomach at Sea is the cauſe of his ſickneſs, and not the Pilots government of the ſhip.

2. *God doth not infuſe the luſt or excite it*, though he doth preſent the object about which the luſt is exerciſed. God delivered up Chriſt to the *Jews*, he preſented him to them: but never commanded them to crucifie him, nor infuſed that malice into them, nor quickned it; but he ſeeing ſuch a frame, withdrew his reſtraining grace, and left them to the conduct of their own vitiated wills. All the corruption in the World ariſeth from luſt in us, not from the object which God in his providence preſents to us. 2 *Pet.* 1. 4. *the corruption that is in the World through luſt.* The Creature is from God, but the abuſe of it from corruption. God created the grape, and filled the Wine with a ſprightlineſs; but he doth never infuſe a drunken frame into a man, or excite it. Providence preſents us with the Wine, but the precept is to uſe it ſoberly. Can God be blamed, if that which is good in it ſelf, be turned into

Poyſon

Poyſon by others? No more then the flower can be called a criminal, becauſe the Spiders nature turns that into venome, which is ſweet in it ſelf. Man hath ſuch a nature not from Creation, wherein God is poſitive, but from corruption, wherein God is permiſſive. Providence brings a man into ſuch a condition of poverty, but it doth not encourage his ſtubbornneſs and impatience. There is no neceſſity upon thee from God to exerciſe thy ſin under affliction, when others under the ſame exerciſe, their graces. The Rod makes the Child ſmart, but it is its own ſtubbornneſs makes it curſe. In ſhort, though it be by Gods permiſſion that we *can* do evil, yet it is not by his inſpiration that we *will* to do evil, that is wholely from our ſelves.

3. *God ſupports the faculties wherewith a man ſinneth, and ſupports a man in that act wherein he ſinneth, but concurrs not to the ſinfulneſs of that act.* No ſin doth properly conſiſt in the act it ſelf, as an act, but in the deficiency of that act from the rule. No action wherein there is ſin, but may be done as an action, though not as an irregular action. Killing a man

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is not in it ſelf unlawful, for then no magiſtrate ſhould Execute a Malefactor for murdering another, and juſtice would ceaſe in the World; man alſo muſt diveſt himſelf of all thoughts of preſerving his Life againſt an invader; but to kill a man without juſt cauſe without authority, without rule, contrary to rule, out of revenge, is unlawful. So that it is not the act, as an act, is the ſin, but the ſwerving of that act from the rule, makes it a ſinful act: So ſpeaking, as ſpeaking, is not a ſin, for it is a power and act God hath endued us with, but ſpeaking irreverently and diſhonourably of God, or falſly and ſlandrouſly of man, or any otherwiſe irregularly, therein the ſin lyes. So that it is eaſie to conceive that an act and the viciouſneſs of it are ſeparable. That act which is the ſame in kind with another, may be laudable, and the other baſe and vile in reſpect of its circumſtances. The mind wherewith a man doth this or that act and the irregularity of it, makes a man a criminal. There is a concurrence of God to the act wherein we ſin, but the ſinfulneſs of that act is purely from the inherent corruption of the Creature

ture. As the power and act of seeing is communicated to the eye by the Soul, but the seeing doubly or dimly, is from the vitiousness of the Organ, the eye. God hath no manner of immediate efficiency in producing sin; as the Sun is not the efficient cause of darkness, though the darkness immediately succeeds the setting of the Sun, but it is the deficient cause. So God withdraws his grace, and leaves us to that lust which is in our wills. *Act.* 14. 16. *Who in times past suffered all Nations to walk in their own wayes.* He bestowed no grace upon them, but left them to themselves. As a man who lets a glass fall out of his hand is not the efficient cause that the glass breaks, but its own brittle nature, yet he is the deficient cause, because he withdraws his support from it. God is not obliged to give us grace, because we have made a total forfeiture of it. He is not a Debtor to any man by way of merit, of any thing but punishment. He is indeed in some sence a Debtor to those that are in Christ upon the account of Christs purchase and his own promise, but not by any merits of theirs.

4. *Gods*

4. *Gods providence is converſant about ſin, as a puniſhment, yet in a very righteous manner.* God did not will the firſt ſin of *Adam* as a puniſhment, becauſe there was no puniſhment due to him before he ſinned, but he willed the continuance of it as a puniſhment to the nature *ſub ratione boni.* This being a judicial act of God, is therefore righteouſly willed by him. Puniſhment is a moral good. 'Tis alſo a righteous thing to ſuit the puniſhment to the nature of the offence, and what can be more righteous then to puniſh a man by that wherein he offends? Hence God is ſaid to give up men to ſin. *Rom.* 2. 26, 27. *for this cauſe God gave them up unto vile affections.* And *to ſend ſtrong deluſions that they may believe a lye.* And the reaſon is rendred 2 *Theſ.* 2. 12. *that they all might be damned, who believed not the truth, but had pleaſure in unrighteouſneſs.* * What more righteous then to make thoſe vile affections, and that unrighteouſneſs their puniſhment, which they made their pleaſure, and to leave them to purſue their own ſinful inclinations, and make them (as the Pſalmiſt ſpeaks) *Pſal.* 5. 10. *fall by their own Counſels?* A Drunkards

* Theſ. 2. 11.

Drunkards Beaſtlines is his puniſhment as well as his Sin. Thus God delivers up ſome to their own luſts as a puniſhment both to themſelves and others. As he hardened *Pharaohs* heart for the deſtruction both of himſelf and his People.

5. *God by his providence draws glory to himſelf and good out of ſin.* 'Tis the higheſt excellency to draw good out of evil, and it is Gods right to manifeſt his excellency when he pleaſes, and to direct that to his honour, which is acted againſt his Law. The holineſs of God could never intend Sin as Sin. But the Wiſdom of God foreſeeing it, and decreeing to permit it, intended the making it ſubſervient to his own honour. He would not permit it but for ſome good, becauſe he is infinitely good, and could not by reaſon of that goodneſs, ſuffer that which is purely evil, if by his Wiſdom he could not raiſe good out of it: 'Tis purely evil as it is contrary to Law; It is good *ratione finis* as God orders it by his Providence; yet that goodneſs flows not from the nature of ſin, but from the wiſe diſpoſal of God.

As God at the Creation framed a beautiful

beautiful world out of a *Chaos*, out of matter without form, and void. So by his infinite wisdom he extracts honour to himself, out of the sins of men. As sin had dishonoured him at its entrance in defacing his works, and depraving his Creature: So he would make use of the sins of men in repairing his honour, and restoring the Creature.

'Tis not conceivable by us, what way there could be more congruous to the wisdom and holiness of God, as the state of the World then stood, to bring about the death of Christ, which in his decree, was necessary to the satisfaction of his justice, without ordering the evil of some mens hearts to serve his gracious purpose. If we could suppose that Christ could commit some capital crime for which he should deserve death, which was impossible by reason of the hypostatical union, the whole design of God for redemption had sunk to the ground. Therefore God doth restrain or let out the fury of mens passions, and the corrupt habits of their wills to such a degree as should answer directly to the full point of his most gracious will and no further. He lets out their

their malice ſo far as was conducing to the grand deſign of his death, and reſtrains it from every thing that might impair the truth of any prediction, as in the parting his garments, or breaking his bones. If God had put him to death by ſome thunder or otherwiſe, and after raiſed him, how could the voluntarineſs of Chriſt appear, which was neceſſary to make him a perfect oblation? How would his innocency have appeared? The ſtrangneſs of the judgment would have made all men believe him ſome great and notorious ſinner. How then could the Goſpel have been propagated? Who would have entertained the Doctrine of one, whoſe innocency could not be cleared? If it be ſaid, *God might raiſe him again*, what evidences would have been had that he had been really dead: But as the caſe was, his Enemies confeſs him dead really, and many Witneſſes there were of his reſurrection.

1. *God orders the ſins of men to the glory of his grace.* As a foil ſerves to make the luſtre of a Diamond more conſpicuous; ſo doth God make uſe of the deformities

deformities of men to make his own grace more illuſtrious, and convey it with a more pleaſing relliſh to them. Never doth grace appear more amiable, never is God entertained with ſo high admirations, as by thoſe who of the worſt of ſinners are made the choiceſt of Saints; *Paul* often takes occaſion from the greatneſs of his ſin, to admire the unſearchable riches of that grace which pardoned him.

2. *God orders them to bring forth temporal mercies.* In Providence there are two things conſiderable. Firſt *Mans Will.* 2. *Gods purpoſe.* What mans will intends as a harm in ſin, God in his ſecret pupoſe orders to ſome eminent advantage. In the ſelling of *Joſeph*, his Brothers intend the execution of their revenge. And God orders it for the advancement of himſelf and the preſervation of his unrighteous Enemies, who might otherwiſe have ſtarved. His Brothers ſent him to fruſtrate his dream, and God to fulfil it. Our reformation and return from under the yoke of Antichriſt, was by the wiſe diſpoſal of God occaſioned by the three great Idols of the World, the luſt of the Eye, the luſt of the Fleſh,

and

and the pride of life; luſt, covetouſneſs and ambition, three vices notoriouſly eminent in *Henry* the Eighth, the firſt inſtrument in that work. What he did for the ſatisfaction of his Luſt is ordered by God for the glory of his mercy to us. And though the Papiſts upon that account reflect upon our Reformation, they may as well reflect upon the glorious work of redemption, becauſe it was in the wiſdom of God brought about by *Judas* his covetouſneſs, and the *Jews* malice.

3. *God orders them for the glory of his juſtice upon others.* *Nathan* had threatned *David*, that one of his own houſe ſhould lye with his Wifes in the ſight of the Sun. * *Ahithophel* adviſeth *Abſalom* to do ſo, not with any deſign to fulfill Gods threatning, but ſecure his own ſtake by making the quarrel between the Father and the Son irreconcileable, becauſe he might well fear, that upon a peace between *David* and *Abſalom* he might be offered up as a Sacrifice to *Davids* juſtice. God orders *Ahithophels* counſel, and *Abſaloms* ſin to the glory of his juſtice in *Davids* puniſhment.

* 2 Sam. 12. 11.

The ambition of *Vespasian* and *Titus* was only to reduce *Judea* to the *Roman* Province after the revolt of it, But God orders hereby the execution of his righteous will in the punishment of the *Jews* for their rejecting Christ, and the accomplishment of Christs prediction. *Luk.* 19.43. *for the days shall come, that thy enemies shall cast a trench about thee*, &c. To conclude, if we deny God the government of sin in the course of his providence, we must necessarily deny him the government of the World, because there is not an action of any mans in the world, which is under the government of God, but is either a sinful action, or an action mixt with sin.

Luk. 19.43

God therefore in his government doth advance his power in the weakness, his wisdom in the follies, his holiness in the sins, his mercy in the unkindness, and his justice in the unrighteousness of men, yet God is not defiled with the impurities of men, but rather draws forth a glory to himself, as a rose doth a greater beauty and sweetness from the strong smell of the garlike set near it.

Vid. Ovid *Amor.* lib. 3. Eleg. 3. v. 1. *and* v. 27.

Boetius *de Consol.* lib. 1. *Quest.* 2.

Second *Question. If there be a providence,*

dence, how comes thoſe unequal diſtributi-ons to happen in the World? How is it ſo bad with good men as if they were the greateſt enemies to God, and ſo well with the wicked, as if they were the moſt affectionate Friends? Doth not virtue languiſh away in obſcurity, whiles wickedneſs ſtruts about the world? What is the reaſon that ſplendid virtue is oppreſt by injuſtice, and notorious vices triumph in proſperity? It would make men believe that the world was governed rather by a blind and unrighteous, then by a wiſe, good and juſt Governor, when they ſee things in ſuch diſorder as if the Devil had, as he pretends, the whole power of the world delivered to him: * and God had left all care of it to his will. * *Luk.* 4. 6.

Anſw. This conſideration has heightned the minds of many againſt a providence. It was the notion of many Heathens, when they ſaw many who had acted with much gallantry for their Countreys afflicted, they queſtioned *whether there were a ſuperintendent power over the world.* This hath alſo been the ſtumbling block of many taught in a higher School then that of nature, the *Jews*, *Mal.* 2. *See inſtances in* Jackſon. vol. 1. 8. cap. 4. §. 9.

17. *ye ſay every one that doth evil is good in the ſight of the Lord, and he delighteth in them and where is the God of judgment?* Yea, and the obſervation of the outward felicities of *vice*, and the oppreſſions of *goodneſs* have cauſed fretting commotions in the hearts of Gods people, the *Pſal.* 73. is wholly deſigned to anſwer this caſe. *Jeremy* though fixed in the acknowledgment of Gods righteouſneſs, would debate the reaſon of it with God. *Jer.* 12. 1. *righteous art thou, oh Lord, yet let me talk with thee of thy judgments, wherefore doth the way of the wicked proſper, wherefore are all they happy that deal very treacherouſly? thou haſt planted them, yea, they have taken root, they grow, yea, they bring forth fruit.* He perceiving it a univerſal caſe [*wherefore are all they happy*, &c.] did not know how to reconcile it with the righteouſneſs of God. Nor *Habbakkuck* with the holineſs of God. *Hab.* 1. 14. [*thou art of purer eyes then to behold iniquity, wherefore holdeſt thou thy Tongue, when the wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous then he?* In point of Gods goodneſs too, *Job* expoſtulates

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the caſe with God. *Job* 10. 3. *Is it good unto thee that thou ſhouldeſt oppreſs, that thou ſhouldeſt deſpiſe the work of thy hands, and ſhine upon the Counſel of the wicked?* You ſee upon the account of holineſs, righteouſneſs, goodneſs, the three great attributes of God it hath been queſtioned by good men, and upon the account of his wiſdom by the wicked *Jews*.

1. Anſwer in general, *Is it not a high preſumption for ignorance to judge Gods proceedings?* In the courſe of providence ſuch things are done that men could not imagine could be done without injuſtice, yet when the whole connexion of their ends is unravelled, they appear highly beautiful, and diſcover a glorious wiſdom and righteouſneſs. If it had entered into the heart of man to think that God ſhould ſend his Son in a very low eſtate to dye for ſinners, would it not have been judged an unjuſt and unreaſonable act, to deliver up his ſon for rebells, the innocent for the criminals, to ſpare the offender and puniſh the obſerver of his Law? Yet when the deſign is revealed and acted, what an admirable connexion is there of juſtice, wiſdom, mercy, and holineſs *Anſw.* 1.

which men could not conceive of. It will be known to be ſo at laſt in Gods dealing with all his members. We are incompetent judges of the righteouſneſs and wiſdom of God, unleſs we were infinitely righteous and wiſe our ſelves; we muſt be Gods, or in another ſtate before we can underſtand the reaſons of all Gods actions. We judge according to the law of ſenſe and ſelf, which are inferior to the rules whereby God works. *Judge* * 1 Cor. 4. 5. *nothing* then *before the time.** It is not a time for us to paſs a judgment upon things. A falſe judgment is eaſily made, when neither the Counſels of mens hearts, nor the particular Laws of Gods actions are known to us. In general it is certain, God doth righteouſly order his providences; he may ſee ſome inward corruptions in good men to be demoliſhed by afflictions, and ſome good moral affections, ſome uſeful deſigns, or ſome ſervices he employs wicked men in to be rewarded in this life.

Secondly. 2. *God is Soveraign of the World.* He is *ſui juris*, *The Earth* is his, *and the fulneſs thereof*, may he not do what he will with his own? * Who ſhall take upon * Mat. 20. 15.

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them to controul God, and preſcribe Laws to him how to deal with his Creatures? Why ſhould a finite underſtanding preſcribe meaſures and methods to an infinite Majeſtie?

3. *God is wiſe and juſt, and knows how to diſtribute.* If we queſtion his providence, we queſtion his wiſdom. Is it fit for us who are but of yeſterday, and know nothing, to ſay to an infinite Wiſdom, what doſt thou? and to direct the only wiſe God to a method of his actions? His own wiſdom will beſt direct him to the time when to puniſh the inſolence of the wicked, and relieve the miſeries of his people: We ſee the preſent diſpenſations, but are we able to underſtand the internal motives? May there not be ſome ſins of righteous mens Parents that he will viſit upon their Children, ſome virtues of their Anceſtors, that he will reward even in their wicked poſterity? He may uſe wicked men as inſtruments in ſome ſervice. 'Tis part of his diſtributive juſtice to reward them. They aim at theſe things in their ſervice, and he gratifies them according to their deſires. Let not then his righteouſneſs be an argument a-

Thirdly:

gainst his providence; his righteousness with God not to be in arrears with them. Sometimes God gives them not to them as rewards of any moral virtue, but puts power into their hands, that they may be instruments of his justice upon some offenders against him, *Isa.* 10. 5. The staff in the Assyrians hand was Gods indignation.

Fourthly. 4. *There is a necessity for some seeming inequality at least in order to the good government of the world.* Can all in any community of men be of an equal height? A house hath not beams and rafters of an equal bigness, some are greater, and some less. The world is Gods Family. 'Tis here as in a family, all cannot have the same office, but they are divided according to the capacities of some persons, and the necessities of others. Providence would not be so apparent in the beauty of the world, if all men were alike in their stations. Where would the beauty of the body be, if all the members had one office and one immediate end? Man would cease to be man, if every member had not some distinct work, and a universal agreement in the common profit of

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the Body. All mankind is but one great body constituted of several members, which have distinct offices, but all ordered to the good of the whole; the Apostle argues this excellently in a parallel case of the diversities of gifts in the Church 1 *Cor.* 12. 19. *If all were one member, where were the body?* v. 23. *those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon those we bestow more abundant honour*, v. 24. *God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lackt.* What harmony could there be, if all voices and sounds were exactly the same in a consort? Who can be delighted with a Picture that hath no shadows? The afflictions of good men are a foyl to set off the beauty of Gods providence in the world.

5. *Unequal dispensations do not argue carelessness.* Fifthly. A Father may give one Child a gayer Coat then he gives another, yet he extends his fatherly care and tenderness over all: According to the several employments he puts his Children upon, he is at greater expence, and yet loves one as well as another, and makes provision for all. As the Soul takes care of the lowest

loweſt member and communicates Spirits to every part for their motions: So though God place ſome in a higher, ſome in a lower condition, yet he takes care of all, *God divides to every man as he will.** Every man hath a ſeveral ſhare according to Gods pleaſure, of a goodneſs in the world as well as of gifts in the Church.

* 1 Cor. 12. 11.

Sixthly. 6. *Yet upon due conſideration the inequality will not appear ſo great as the complaint of it.* If the wants of one, and the enjoyment of another were weighed in the ballance, the Scales might not appear ſo uneven; we ſee ſuch a mans wealth, but do you underſtand his cares? A running ſore may lye under a purple Robe. Health, *the ſalt of bleſſings*, as one calls it, is beſtowed upon the Labourer, when many that wallow in abundance, have thoſe torturing diſeaſes which imbitter their pleaſures. If ſome want thoſe worldly ornaments which others have, may they not have more wiſdom then thoſe that enjoy them, (the nobleſt perfection of a rational Creature?) *Pro.* 3. 13, 14. *The merchandize of it is better then the Merchandize of Silver, and the gain thereof then fine Gold.* *Pro.* 15. 16.

* Pro. 15. 16.

better

better is a little with the fear of the Lord, then great treaſure and trouble therewith. As ſome are ſtript of wealth and power, ſo they are ſtript of the incumbrances they bring with them. One hath that ſerenity and tranquillity of mind, which the cares and fears of others will not ſuffer them to enjoy, and a grain of contentment is better then many pounds of wealth. 'Tis not a deſireable thing to be a great Prince, attended with as many cares and fears as he hath Subjects in his Empire. He made a true eſtimate of greatneſs, that ſaid he would not ſtoop to take up a Crown if it lay at his feet. But more particularly to the parts of the caſe,

I. *It is not well with bad men here.*

1. *Is it well with them who are tortured by their own luſts?* What peace can worldly things beſtow upon a Soul filled with impurity? in 2 *Cor.* 7. 1. Sin is called filthineſs, can it be well with them that have naſty Souls? Is it well with them who are rackt by pride, ſtung with cares, gnawn with envy, diſtracted by unſatiable deſires, and torn in pieces by their own fears? Can it be well with ſuch who have a multitude of vipers in their breaſts, ſticking

ing all their ſtings into them, though the Sun ſhine, and the ſhadows drop upon them? You are Spectators of their felicity, but do you underſtand their inward gripes? *Pro.* 14. 13. *even in laughter the heart is ſorrowful.* Can ſilken Curtains or purple Clothes confer a happineſs upon thoſe who have a mortal plague-ſore poyſoning their bodies, and are ready to expire? Sin is their plague, whatever is their happineſs. * Their inſolent luſts are a far greater miſery then the poſſeſſion of all the Kingdoms in the World can be a happineſs.

* 1 *King.* 8. 38. *Sin is called the plague of the heart.*

II. *Is it well with them who have ſo great an account to make, and know not how to make it?* Thoſe that enjoy much are more in Gods debt, and therefore more accountable. The account of wicked men is the greater, becauſe of their abundance; and their unfitneſs to make that account is the greater, becauſe of their abuſe. Would any reckon themſelves happy to be called upon to give an account of their Stewardſhip for Talents, and know not how to give a good account of one farthing? *Luk.* 16. 2. *give an account of thy Stewardſhip.*

III. *Is*

III. *Is it well with them who are the worſe for what they have?* Is it a happineſs to command others, and be more ſlaves to the worſt of Creatures, then any can be to them? The wicked mans well ſpread table ſometimes proves his ſnare * and his deſtruction is bound up in his very proſperity: *Pro.* 1. 32. and *the proſperity of fools ſhall deſtroy them.* Proſperity falling upon an unregenerate heart, like the Sun and rain upon bad ground, draws forth nothing but weeds and vermin. Would you think it your happineſs to be Maſters of their concerns, and ſlaves to their pride? Is a ſtubbornneſs againſt God ſo deſireable a thing, which is ſtrengthened by thoſe things in the hands of the wicked?

* *Pſal.* 69. 22.

IV. *Is it well with them who in the midſt of their proſperity are reſerved for juſtice?* Can that Traytor be accounted happy that is fed in priſon by the Prince with better diſhes then many a loyal ſubject hath at his table, but only to keep him alive for his Tryal, and a publick Example of juſtice? God raiſes ſome for greater falls: Miſerable was the felicity of *Pharaoh*, to be raiſed up by God for a Sub-

Subject to ſhew in him the power of his Wrath. * 'Tis but a little time before they ſhall be *cut down as graſs, and wither as the green herb. Pſal.* 37. 2. None would value the condition of that Souldier who leaping into a River to ſave a Kings Crown, and putting it upon his own head, that he might be enabled to ſwim out with it, was rewarded for ſaving it, and executed for wearing it. God rewards wicked men for their ſervice, and puniſhes them for their inſolence.

* *Exod.* 9. 16.

Secondly. 2. *Neither is it bad here with good men, if all be well conſidered.* Other mens judgment of a good man is frivolous, they cannot rightly judge of his ſtate and concerns, but he can make a judgment of theirs. 1 *Cor.* 2. 15. *a ſpiritual man judgeth all things, but he himſelf is judged of no man.* No man can make a ſound judgment and eſtimate of a righteous mans ſtate in any condition, unleſs he hath had experience of the like in all the circumſtances, the inward comforts as well as the outward Croſſes. For,

I. *Adverſity cannot be called abſolutely an evil, as proſperity cannot be called abſolutely a good.* They are rather indiffe-

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rent things becauſe they may be uſed either for the honour or diſhonour of God As they are uſed for his honour, they are good, and as uſed for his diſhonour, they are evil. The only abſolutely bad thing in the world is ſin, which cannot be in its own nature, but a diſhonour to God. The only abſolutely good thing in the world is holineſs, and a likeneſs to God, which cannot be in its own nature, but for his glory. As for all other things I know no true ſatisfaction can be in them, but as they are ſubſervient to Gods honour, and give us an advantage for imitating ſome one or other of his perfections. Croſſes in the Scripture are not excluded from thoſe things we have a right to by Chriſt, when they may conduce to our good, 1 *Cor.* 3. 22. *Life and Death*, things *preſent*, and things *to come* are yours, and you are Chriſts. Since the Revelation of the Goſpel, I do not remember that any ſuch complaint againſt the Providence of God fell from any holy man in the new Teſtament; for our Saviour had given them another proſpect of thoſe things. The holy men in the Old Teſtament comforted themſelves

ſelves againſt this objection by the end of the wicked which ſhould happen, and the rod ceaſe.* In the New Teſtament we are more comforted by the certain operation of croſſes to our good and ſpiritual advantage. Our Saviour did not promiſe wealth and honour to his followers, nor did he think it worth his pains of coming and dying, to beſtow ſuch gifts upon his Children: He made Heaven their happineſs, and the Earth their Hell; the Croſs was their badge here, and the Crown their reward hereafter; they ſeemed not to be a purchaſe congruous to ſo great a price of Blood. Was Gods Providence to Chriſt the more to be queſtioned becauſe he was poor? Had he the leſs love to him, becauſe he was *a man of ſorrows*, even while he was a God of glory? Such groundleſs conceits ſhould never enter into Chriſtians, who can never ſeriouſly take up Chriſts yoke without a proviſo of afflictions, who can never be Gods Sons, without expecting his corrections.

* *Pſal.* 73. *Rom.* 8.

2, *God never leaves good men ſo bare, but he provides for their neceſſity.* Pſal. 84, 11. *the Lord will give grace and glory, and*

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no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly. If any thing be good, an upright man may expect it from God's providence, if it be not good, he should not desire it: Howsoever grace, which is necessary for preparing thee for happiness, and glory, which is necessary for fixing thee in it, he will be sure to give, we have *David*'s experience for it * in the whole course of his life. * *Psal.* 37. 5.

3. *The little good men have, is better then the highest enjoyments of wicked men.* *Psal.* 37. 16. *a little that a righteous man hath, is better then the riches of many wicked,* not better then many riches of the wicked, but better then the riches of many wicked, better then all the treasures of the whole Mass of the wicked world, others have them in a providential way, good men in a gracious way. *Pro.* 16. 8. *better is a little with righteousness then great revenues without right,* without a Covenant right. Wicked prosperity is like a shadow that glides away in a moment, whereas a righteous mans little is a part of Christ's purchase, and part of that inheritance which shall endure for ever, *Psal.* 37. 18. *their inheritance shall be for ever.*

ver, i. e. God regards the ſtate of the righteous, whether good or evil, all that befals them. God doth all with a repect to his everlaſting inheritance. No man hath worldly things without their wings. And though the righteous have worldly things with their wings, yet that love whereby they have them, hath no wings ever to fly away from them; how can thoſe things be good to a man that can never taſt them, nor God in them?

4. *No righteous man would in his ſober wits be willing to make an exchange of his ſmarteſt afflictions for a wicked mans proſperity, with all the circumſtances attending it.* It cannot therefore be bad with the righteous in the worſt condition: Would any man be ambitious of ſnares, that knows the deceit of them? Can any but a mad man exchange Medicines for poyſons? Is it not more deſireable to be upon a Dunghil with an intimate converſe with God, then upon a Throne without it? They gain a world in proſperity, a righteous man gains his Soul by afflictions, and poſſeſſes it in patience, is the exchange of a valuable conſideration? God ſtrips good men of the enjoyment of the World, that he

he may wean them from the love of it, keeps them from Idolatry by removing the fuel of it; ſends afflictions that he may not loſe them, nor they their Souls. Would any man exchange a great goodneſs laid up for him that fears God, for a leſſer goodneſs laid out upon them that are Enemies to him? * Who would exchange a few outward comforts with God's promiſe, inward comforts with aſſurance of Heaven, Godlineſs with contentment, a ſweet and Spiritual life, Soveraignity over himſelf and luſts, though attended with ſufferings, for the Government of the whole World?

* *Pſal.* 31. 19.

5. *It is not ill with the righteous in afflictions, becauſe they have high advantages by them. That cannot be abſolutely evil, which conduceth to a greater good.*

As, Firſt, *Senſible experiments of the tender providence of God over them.* If the righteous had not afflictions in this life, God would loſe the glory of his providence, and they the ſweetneſs in a gracious deliverance from them in ways which makes the affliction the ſweeter, as well as the mercy; they would loſe

the comfort of them in not having ſuch ſenſible evidences of God's gracious care.

The ſweetneſs of the promiſes made for times of trouble would never be taſted. *Pſal.* 37. 19. *They ſhall not be aſhamed in the evil time*; that is, they ſhall be mightily encouraged and ſupported. God's people do beſt underſtand God's ſtrength, when they feel the ſmart of mens malice. 2 *Tim.* 4. 17. [*the Lord ſtood with me and ſtrengthened me.*] he had never felt ſo much of God's ſtrength, if he had not taſted much of mans wickedneſs in forſaking him *Pſal.* 37. 39. [*he is their ſtrength,*] when in times of trouble they experiment more of his care in preſerving them, and his ſtrength in ſupporting them, then at other times; Abundance of conſolations are manifeſted in abundance of ſufferings * A greater ſenſe of *joy* and *glory* lights upon them in a ſtorm of perſecutions. Men ſee the ſufferings of the godly, but they do not behold that inward peace which compoſeth and delights their Souls worth the whole Maſs of the Worlds goodneſs, and pleaſures of the unrighteous.

* 2 *Cor.* 1. 5. 1 *Pet.* 4. 13, 14.

2. *Inward improvements.* Opportunities

ties to manifeſt more love to God, more dependance on him, the perfection of the Soul. 1 *Tim.* 5. 5. Now *ſhe that is a Widow indeed, and deſolate, truſts in God, and continues in Supplications and Prayers night and day*; there is a ground of more exerciſe of truſt in God, and ſupplication to him. The poor and deſolate have an advantage for the actual exerciſe of thoſe graces, which a proſperous condition wants: God changeth the metal by it, what was Lead and Iron, he makes come forth as gold. *Job.* 23. 10. *when he hath tried me, I ſhall come forth as gold.* Croſſes and ſufferings which fit good men for ſpecial ſervice here, and eternal happineſs hereafter, can no more be ſaid to be evil, then the fire which refines the gold, and prepares it for a Prince's uſe. If there were not ſuch evils, what groud could you have to exerciſe patience, what Heroick acts of faith could you put forth without difficulties, how could you believe againſt hope, if you had not ſometimes ſomething to contradict your hopes? And if a good man ſhould have a confluence of that which the ignorant and pedantical world calls

happineſs, he might undervalue the pleaſures of a better life, deface the beauty of his own Soul, and withdraw his love from the moſt gratifying, as well as the moſt glorious object, unto that which is not worth the leaſt grain of his affection.

3. *Future glory.* The great enquiry at the day of Chriſt's appearing, will be how good men bare their ſufferings, what improvements they had, and the greater their purity by them, the greater will be their praiſe and honour. 1 *Pet.* 1. 7. *That the tryal of your faith* [viz. by manifold Temptations] *may be found to praiſe and honour and glory, at the appearing of Jeſus Chriſt.* For a good improvement by them, they will have a Publick praiſe from God's mouth, and a Crown of Honour ſet upon their heads. Providence ſends even light afflictions as ſo many Artificers, to make the Crown more Maſſy and more bright, 2 *Cor.*4.17. [*Works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of Glory.* They are at work about a good man's Crown, while they make him ſmart. They prepare him for heaven, and make it more grateful to him when he comes to poſſeſs it. A Chriſtian carriage

riage in them prepares for greater degrees of Glory. Every ſtroke doth but more beautifie the Crown.

6. *Sufferings of good men for the Truth highly glorifies the Providence of God.* This is a matter of glory and honour, 1 *Pet.* 4. 16. *If any man ſuffer as a Chriſtian, let him not be aſhamed, but let him glorifie God on this behalf.* They thereby bear a Teſtimony to the higheſt Act of Providence that God ever exerciſed, even the redemption of the world by the blood of his Son. And the Church which is the higheſt object of his Providence in the world, takes the deeper root and ſprings up the higher; the foundation of it was laid in the blood of Chriſt, and the growth of it is furthered by the blood of Martyrs. The carriage of the righteous in them, makes the Truth they profeſs more valued. It enhanceth the excellency of Religion, and manifeſts it to be more amiable for its beauty than for its dowry; ſince they ſee it deſirable by the ſufferers, not only without worldly enjoyments, but with the ſharpeſt miſeries. This conſideration hath wrought upon many to embrace the

Religion of the Sufferers. If it reaches as far as death, they are but diſpatched to their Fathers houſe, and the day of their death is the day of their Coronation; and what evil is there in all this?

To conclude, this Argument is ſtronger (upon the infallible righteouſneſs of God's nature) for a day of Reckoning after this life, than againſt Providence. Tis a more rational concluſion, That God will have a time to juſtifie the righteouſneſs and wiſdom of his Providential Government, and repair the honour of the righteous, oppreſſed by the injuſtice of the wicked. And indeed, unleſs there be a retribution in another world, the queſtion is unanſwerable, and all the reaſon in the world knows not how to ſalve the Holineſs and Righteouſneſs of God in his Providential Diſpenſations in this life; ſince we ſee here Goodneſs unrewarded and debaſed to the dunghill, Vice glorying in impunity, and ranting to the firmament. We cannot ſee how it can conſiſt with the nature of God's Wiſdom, Righteouſneſs and Holineſs, if there were not another life wherein God will manifeſt his Righteouſneſs in the puniſhing ſin,

and

and rewarding goodneſs: For it is impoſſible that a God of Infinite Juſtice ſhould leave ſin unpuniſhed, and Grace unrewarded here or hereafter. The Scripture gives us ſo full an account of a future ſtate that may ſatisfie all Chriſtians in this buſineſs.

The wicked rich man is in his Purple, and *Lazarus* in his rags, yet *Abraham*'s Boſom is prepared for the one, and an endleſs Hell for the other. *Jeremy* reſolves the caſe in his diſpute with God about it, *Jer.* 12. 3. *Pull them out like ſheep for the ſlaughter, and prepare them for the day of ſlaughter.* They are but fattening for the knife of Juſtice, and the day will come when they ſhall be conſum'd, like the fat of Lambs in the Sacrifice, which ſhall wholly evaporate into ſmoke, ſo the Pſalmiſt reſolves it in *Pſal.* 37. 20. a Pſalm written for the preſent caſe. God laughs at their ſecurity in a way of mockery, *Pſal.* 37. 13. *The Lord ſhall laugh at him, for he ſees that his day is coming.* God's day for the juſtification of his proceedings in the world, and the wicked man's day for his own deſtruction, wherein they ſhall all be deſtroyed together,

Pſal.

Pſal. 37.38. The whole maſs of them in one bundle. Who then will charge God with unequal diſtributions at that day which is appointed for the clearing up of his righteouſneſs, which is here maskt in the world? who can be fond of the State of the wicked? Who would be fond of a dead mans condition becauſe he lies in State, whoſe Soul may be condemned, whilſt his body with a pompous ſolemnity is carried to the Grave, and both body and Soul joyned together at the reſurrection, adjudged to eternal miſery?

Q. 2. What hath been ſaid in this, will alſo anſwer another Queſtion, *Why God doth not immediately puniſh notorious offenders*, ſince the beſt governments in the world are ſuch as call the violaters of the Law to a ſpeedy account to keep up the honour of Juſtice? Thus the *Epicures* charge God with neglects of providence, becauſe if he doth puniſh wicked men, it is later then is fit and juſt, *becauſe ſentence againſt an evil work is not executed ſpeedily, therefore the heart of the Sons of men is fully ſet in them to do evil.* Eccleſ. 8. 11. Delay of Juſtice is an encouragement to Sin.

Anſw. 1. *This is an argument for Gods patience,*

patience, none againſt his providence. Should he make ſuch quick work, what would become of the world? Could it have held out to this day? If God had inſtantly taken revenge upon thoſe that thus diſparage his providence, the framer of ſuch an objection had not been alive. No man is ſo perfectly good, but he might fall under the revenging ſtroke of his ſword, if he pleaſed to draw it. Suffer God to evidence his patience here, ſince after the winding up of the World, he will have no time to manifeſt it. God doth indeed ſometimes ſend the ſharp arrow of ſome judgment upon a notorious offender, to let him underſtand that he hath not forgotten how to govern, but he doth not alwaies do ſo, that his patience may be gloryfied in bearing with his rebellious Creature.

2. *God is juſt in that wherein the queſtion ſuppoſeth him unjuſt*, he ſuffers wicked men to continue to be the plagues of the places where they live, and the executioners of his Juſtice upon offenders againſt him. *Pſal.* 17. 13. The wicked are God's *Sword*. *Jeremiah* 47. 6. Thoſe that God would ſtirr up againſt the *Philiſtines*,

are called the *Sword* of the Lord. *Iſa.* 10. 5. *Aſſur* is ſaid to be the *Rod* of his anger; would it conſiſt with his wiſdom to drop the inſtruments out of his hand, as ſoon as he begins to uſe them? To caſt his Rods out of his hand as ſoon as he takes them up? The rules of juſtice are as much unknown to us, as the communications of his goodneſs to his people are unknown to the world.

3. Let me ask ſuch a one, *whether he never injur'd another man, and whether he would not think it very ſevere, if not unjuſt, that the offended perſon ſhould preſently take revenge of him?* If every man ſhould do the like, how ſoon would mankind be diſpatcht, and the World become a ſhambles, men running furiouſly to one anothers deſtruction for the injuries they have mutually received? Do we praiſe the lenity of parents to their Children, and diſpraiſe the mercy of God, becauſe he doth not preſently uſe his right? Is then forbearance of revenge accounted a virtue in a man, and ſhall it be an imperfection in God? With what reaſon can we thus blame the eminent patience of God, which we have reaſon

to

to adore, and which every one of us are monuments of? The uſe is,

Uſe. 1. Of *Information*,

I. *How unworthy and abſurd a thing is it to deny Providence?* Some of the Heathens fancyed, that God walked his Circuit in Heaven, or ſat with folded arms there, taking no cognizance of what was done in the World; Some indeed upon ſome great emergencies have acknowledged the mercies and juſtice of God, which are the two arms of his providence. The *Barbarians*, *his juſtice*, when they ſaw a Viper leap upon *Paul's* hand, *Act.* 28. 4. they ſay among themſelves, *no doubt this man is a murderer, whom though he hath eſcapt the ſea, yet vengeance ſuffers not to live.* The Mariners in *Jonah* implored *his mercy* in their diſtreſs at Sea, yet they generally attributed affairs to blind chance, and worſhipped Fortune as a Deity. For this vain conceit, the Pſalmiſt calls the Atheiſt fool, *Pſal.* 14. 1. *The fool hath ſaid in his heart, there is no God.* *Potiphar* acknowledged it, he ſaw that the Lord was with *Joſeph*, and favoured his deſigns. *Gen.* 39. 3. *And his Maſter ſaw that the Lord was with him,*

and

and that the Lord made all things that he did to proſper in his hand.

It will not be amiſs to conſider this, For the root of denial of providence is in the hearts of the beſt men, eſpecially under affliction, *Aſah* was a holy man, *Pſal.* 73. 13. ſaith he, verily *I have cleanſed my heart in vain, and waſhed my hands in innocency.* He had taken much pains with his heart, and had been under much affliction. v. 14. [*all the day long have I been plagued and chaſtned every morning.* And the conſideration of this that he ſhould have ſo much affliction with ſo much holineſs, ſo ſtrangely puzled him, that he utters that dreadful Speech as if he had a mind to caſt off all cares about the worſhip of God, and ſanctifying his heart, and repent of all that he had done in that buſineſs, as much as to ſay, had I been as very a villain as ſuch, or ſuch a man, I might have proſpered as well as they, but I was a fool to have any fear of God.

Therefore we will conſider,

1. *The evil of denying Providence.*

2. *The grounds of the denial of it by the heathen,* which we ſhall find in our own hearts.

3. *The*

3. *The various wayes wherein men practically deny providence.*

1. *The evil of denying it.*

1. *It gives a liberty to all ſin.* It gives an occaſion for an unbounded licentiouſneſs; for what may not be done, where there is no government? The *Jews* tell us, That the diſpute between *Cain* and *Abel* was this. *Cain* ſaid, becauſe his ſacrifice was not accepted, that there was no Judge, no reward of good works or puniſhment of bad, which when *Abel* oppoſed, *Cain* ſlew him; they ground it upon the diſcourſe of God with *Cain. v.* 7. which had been about his providence and acceptation of men, if they did well, and puniſhment of men if they did ill; whence they gather, the diſcourſe, *v.* 8. *Cain* had with his brother, was about the ſame ſubject, for *Cain* talked with *Abel*, and upon that diſcourſe roſe up againſt him, and ſlew him. And his diſcourſe afterwards with God. *v.* 9. ſeems to favour it, *am I my Brothers keeper?* Thou doſt ſay, thou art the governour of the World, it is not my concern to look after him. Their conjecture is not improbable. If it were ſo, we ſee how early this opinion began in

First.

* *Targum Hieroſolymit. Mercer in Gen.* 4. 7.

* *Gen.* 4. 7, 8.

in the World, and what was the horrid effect of it, the first sin, the first murder that we read of after the Sin of *Adam*. And what confusion would grow upon the entertainment of such a notion?

Indeed the Scripture every where places sin upon this root. Psal. 10. 11. [*God hath forgotten, he hides his face, he will never see it.*] He hath turned his back upon the World. This was the ground of the oppression of the poor by the wicked which he mentions. *v.* 9, 10. So *Isa.* 26. 10. [The wicked *will not learn righteousness*, he will deal *unjustly*, the reason is, he will not *behold the Majesty of the Lord*; he will not regard God's government of the World, though *his hand be lifted up to strike*. There is no sin, but receives both its birth and nourishment from this bitter root. Let the notion of providence be once thrown out, or the belief of it faint, how will ambition, Covetousness, neglect of God, distrust, impatience and all other bitter gourds grow up in a night? 'Tis from this Topick all iniquity will draw arguments to encourage itself; for nothing doth so much discountenance those rising corruptions,

* *Psal.* 10. 11.

and

and put them out of heart, as an actuated belief, that God takes care of humane affairs. Upon the want of this actuated knowledg God charges all the ſin of *Ephraim*: *Hoſea.* 7. 2. *They conſider* * *not in their hearts that I remember all their wickedneſs.* As if God were blind and did not ſee, or ſtupid and did not concern himſelf, or of a very frail memory ſoon to forget.

* Heb. they ſpeak not to their hearts.

2. *It deſtroys all Religion.* The firſt Foundation of all Religion is, firſt the Being, Secondly the Goodneſs of God in the Government of the World. *Heb.* 11. 6. *he that comes to God, muſt believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently ſeek him.* He is the object of Religion, as he is the Governour of the World. This denial would ſhut up Bibles and Temples, and bring irreligious diſorder into all Societies.

1. *All Worſhip.* He that hath no deſign to govern, is ſuppoſed to expect no homage; if he regards not his Creatures, he cares for no worſhip from them. How is it poſſible to perſwade men to regard him for God, who takes no care of them? Who will adore him, who regards no adoraton?

2. *Prayer.* To what purpoſe ſhould they beg his directions, implore his aſſiſtance in their calamities, if he had no regard at all to his Creatures? What favour can we expect from him who is regardleſs of deſpenſing any?

3. *Praiſe.* Who would make acknowledgments to one, from whom they never received any favour, and hath no mind to receive any acknowledgments from them, becauſe he takes no care of them? If the Deity have no relation to us, how can we have relation to him? To what purpoſe will it be either to call upon him, or praiſe him, which are the prime pieces of Religion, if he concern not himſelf with us?

4. *Dependance, Truſt and Hope.* What reaſon have we to commit our concerns to him, and to depend upon him for relief? Hence the Apoſtle ſaith, *Epheſ.* 2. 12. The Gentiles were *without hope*, and *without God in the World.* The reaſon they were without hope, was becauſe they were without God, they denied a ſettled providence, and acknowledged a blind chance, , and therefore could have no ſound hope; ſo ſome underſtand it of denial of God's government. It might well

well give occaſion to people to utter *Pharaoh's* Speech. *Exod.* 5. 2. *Who is the Lord that I ſhould obey his voice to let Iſrael go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Iſrael go.* What is God that I ſhould ſerve him? I have no ſuch notion of a God that governs the World. The regardleſneſs of his Creature diſobligeth the Creature from any ſervice to him.

3. *It is a high diſparagement of God.* To believe an impotent, ignorant, negligent God, without care of his works, is as bad or worſe then to believe no God at all. The denyal of his providence is made equal with the denyal of God. *Pſal.* 14. 1. *The fool hath ſaid in his heart there is no God.* He denied God, *Elohim* which word notes God's providence. Not there is no *Jehovah*, which notes his eſſence; he denied not God, *quoad eſſentiam*, but *quoad providentiam*, whereupon the Pſalmiſt dubbs the Atheiſt fool. It ſtrips God of his judicial power. How ſhall he judge his Creatures, if he know not what they think, and regards not what they do? How eaſie will it be for him to be impoſed upon by the fair pretences and lying excuſes of men? 'Tis

Diabolical. The Devil denies not God's right to govern, but he denies God's actual government, for he ſaith, *Luk.* 4. 6. *the power and glory of the World is delivered* unto him, *and to whomſoever* ſaith he, *I will, I give it.* God had caſt off all care of all things, and made the Devil his Deputy. He that denies providence, denies moſt of God's attributes, he denies at leaſt the exerciſe of them; he denies his omniſcience, which is the eye of Providence; mercy and juſtice, which are the armes of it; power, which is the life and motion of providence; Wiſdom, which is the rudder of providence, whereby it is ſteered; and holineſs which is the compaſs and rule of the motion of providence.

4. *It is cleerly againſt natural light. Socrates* an Heathen could ſay, whoſoever denied providence, did Δαιμονιᾶν, was poſſeſſed with a Devil.* Should God create a man anew with a ſound judgment, and bring him into the World, when he ſhould ſee the harmony, multitude, vertues and operations of all Creatures, the ſtated times and ſeaſons; muſt he not needs confeſs that ſome inviſible, unconceivable wiſdom did both frame, and

* Montague *againſt* Selden. *p.* 525.

and doth govern all the motions of it? And it is a greater crime in any of us to deny providence either in opinion or practice, then it was or could have been in Heathens; becauſe we have not only that natural reaſon which they had ſufficient to convince us, but ſupernatural revelation in the Scripture wherein God hath declared thoſe methods of his providence which reaſon could not arrive to. As to deny the Creation of the World, is a greater crime in a man that knows the Scripture, then in a Heathen, becauſe that hath put it out of doubt. And the aſſerting of this, being the end of all God's judgments in the World, *Wrath brings the puniſhment of the Sword, that you may know there is a judgment*, *i. e.* providence; the denial of it is a ſin againſt all paſt or preſent judgments, which God hath or doth exerciſe. The Scripture frequently declaring the reaſon of ſuch and ſuch judgments to be, that men may *know* that the *Lord is God*. * *Joh.* 19. 29.

2. The ſecond thing is, the *grounds of the denial of providence*. This Atheiſm has been founded, *Secondly,*

1. *Upon an overweening conceit of mens*

own worths; when men ſaw themſelves fruſtrated of the rewards they expected, and ſaw others that were inſtruments of Tyranny and Luſt, graced with the favours they thought due to their own virtue, they ran into a conceit, that God did not mind the actions of men below. So that it was pride, intereſt, ſelf-conceit and opinion of merit, rather then any well grounded reaſon introduced this part of Atheiſm into the World, for upon any croſs this opinion of merit ſwelled up into blaſphemous ſpeeches againſt God. When we have any thoughts, (as we are apt to have) by our religious acts to merit at God's hand, we act againſt the abſoluteneſs of his providence, as though God could be obliged to us by any other then his own promiſe. Methinks *Job* hath ſome ſpice of this in ſpeaking ſo often of his own integrity, as though God dealt injuriouſly with him in afflicting him, God ſeems to charge him with it. *Job.* 40. 8. [*Wilt thou alſo diſanul my judgment, wilt thou condemn me that thou mayeſt be righteous*? As though in ſpeaking ſo much of his own integrity, and in complaining expreſſions he would accuſe God of in-

juſtice

juſtice and condemn him as an unrighteous governour; and in *Job*'s anſwer you find no ſyllable or word of his integrity to God, but a ſelf abhorrency, *Job.* 42. 26. *Wherefore I abhor my ſelf in duſt and aſhes.* I doubt that from this ſecret root ariſe thoſe Speeches which we ordinarily have among men, *what have I done that God ſhould ſo afflict me?* Though in a ſerious way it is a uſeful queſtion tending to an enquiry into the ſin that is the cauſe of it. But I doubt ordinarily there is too much of a reflection upon God, as though they had deſerved other dealing at his hands. Take heed therefore of pride and conceits of our own worth, we ſhall elſe be led by it to diſparaging conceits of God, which indeed are the roots of all actions contradictory to God's Will.

2. *It is founded upon pedantical and ſenſual notions of* God. As though it might detract from his pleaſures and delight, to look down upon this World, or, as though it were a moleſtation of an infinite power, to buſie himſelf about the cares of ſublunary things. They thought it unſutable to the felicity of God, that it

ſhould interrupt his pleaſure, and make a breach upon his bleſſedneſs. As though it were the felicity of a Prince not to take care of the Government of his Kingdom, nor ſo much as provide for the well being of his Children. I doubt that from ſuch, or as bad conceptions of God may ſpring, ordinarily our diſtruſt of God upon any diſtreſs; take heed therefore of entertaining any conceptions of God, but what the Scripture doth furniſh you with.

3. Or elſe, this ſort of Atheiſm was uſher'd *in by a ſtattering conceit of the majeſty of God.* They thought it unbecoming the excellency of the divine Majeſty to deſcend to a regard of the petty things of the World, this ſeems to be the fancy of them, *Pſal.* 37. 11. *How doth God know, is there knowledge in the moſt high?* They think him too high to know, too high to conſider. How unreaſonable is it to think God moſt high in place, and not in perfection, and if in perfection, not in knowledge and diſcerning? They imagined of him as of a great Prince, taking his pleaſure upon the battlements of his palace, not beholding the Worms upon

on

on the ground; muffled with Clouds, as *Job.* 22. 13, 14. *how doth God know? Can he judge through the dark Clouds? thick Clouds are a covering to him, that he ſees not, and he walks in the circuit of Heaven.* We cannot indeed have too high apprehenſions of God's majeſty and excellency: But we muſt take heed of entertaining ſuperſtitious conceits of God, and ſuch as are diſhonourable to him, or make the grandeur and ambition of men, the meaſures of the greatneſs and Majeſty of God. Upon this root ſprung ſuperſtition and Idolatry, and the Worſhip of *Demons*, who according to the Heathens fancy, were Mediators between God and men. And I doubt ſuch a conceit might be the firſt ſtep to the introducing the Popiſh Saint-worſhip into the Chriſtian World: and this lies at the root of all our omiſſions of duty, or neglects of ſeeking God. Let us therefore have raiſed thoughts of God's majeſty and admiring thoughts of his condeſcention, who notwithſtanding his greatneſs, humbles himſelf to behold what is done upon the Earth. The Pſalmiſt ſets a pattern for both, *Pſal.* 113. 5, 6.

4. *From* * *Pſal.* 113. 5, 6.

4. *From their wiſhes upon any gripes of conſcience.* They found guilt ſtaring them in the face, and were willing to comfort themſelves with the embraces of this Doctrine, wherein they might find a ſecurity and eaſe to their proſtituted conſciences and unbounded liberty in the ways of ſin. Thoſe in *Zephaniah*, were firſt ſettled upon their lees, and then to drive away all fears of puniſhment, deny God's Government. *Zeph.* 1. 12. *the Lord will not do good, neither will he do evil.* A brave liberty for a City to be without a Magiſtrate, a houſe without a Governour, a Ship without a Pilot, expoſed to the mercy of Winds and Waves; A man to be without reaſon, that paſſion and luſt ſhould act their pleaſures; a Liberty that Beaſts themſelves would not have, to be without a Shepherd and one to take care of them. Such wiſhes certainly there are in men upon a ſenſe of guilt: they wiſh for their own ſecurity, there were no providential eye to inſpect them. Take heed therefore of guilt which will draw you to wiſh God deprived of the government of the World, and all thoſe attributes which qualify him for

for it. The readineſs to entertain the motions of Satan, rather then the motions of the Spirit implies a willingneſs in them that Satan might be the God of the World, who favours them in Sin, rather then the Creator who forbids it. But indeed the fears of conſcience evidence a ſecret belief, in men, of a juſt providence, whatever means they uſe to ſtifle it; elſe why is man upon the commiſſion of ſome notorious ſinful act, afraid of ſome evil hap to betide him? Why is he reſtleſs in himſelf? There is no ſinner unleſs extreamly hardned, but hath ſome ſecret touch of conſcience upon notorious enormities: While the work of the Law is written in their heart, their conſcience will bear witneſs and accuſe them. * In the moſt flagitious courſes which the Apoſtle reckons up, * they cannot put off the knowledge of the judgment of God, that they which commit ſuch things are worthy of death, that is, worthy of death by the judgment of God, which judgment is diſcovered in the Law of nature.

* *Rom.* 2. 14.

* *Rom.* 1. 29, 30, 31, 32.

3. The third thing is, *The various ways wherein men practically deny providence, or abuſe it or contemn it.* *Thirdly.*

1. *When*

1. *When we will walk on in a way contrary to checks of providence*, when we will run againſt the will of God manifeſted in his providence, we do deny his government, and refuſe ſubjection to him, when we will be peremptory in our reſolves againſt the declaration of God's will by his checks of providence, we contend with him about the government of us and our actions. Such a diſpute had *Pharaoh* with God, notwithſtanding all the checks by the plagues poured out upon him, he would march againſt *Iſrael* to take them out of God's hand into his own ſervice, again, *Exod.* 15. 9. *The enemy ſaid I will purſue, I will overtake, I will divide the ſpoil, my luſt ſhall be ſatisfied upon them, I will draw my ſword, my hand ſhall deſtroy them.* Here is the will of man vaunting againſt the Governour of the World, reſolved to diſpute God's Royalty with him in ſpight of all the blaſtings of his deſigns, and the ſmart blows he had had from that powerful arm, which coſt him and his ſubjects their lives; they would not underſtand the taking off their wheels, but would run headlong into the Red Sea; A remarkable example of this is in

a good man not ſo peremptory in words, but againſt the revelations of God's mind both by the Prophet and his Providence. *Jehoſaphat* had made a League with *Ahab*, * and God had ordered *Micajah* to acquaint him with the ill ſucceſs of the affair they went about, *verſ.* 16. 19. which *Jehoſaphat* found true, for his own life was in danger, he was hardly beſet by the Enemy upon a miſtake, *verſ.* 31, 32. he had an eminent anſwer of prayer, for upon his cry he had a quick return; God engaged his providence over his Enemies hearts for him, *verſ.* 31. the Lord helped him, and God moved them to depart from him. And for this conjunction and continuance in it againſt *Micajah*'s propheſie, God ſends a Prophet to reprove him. 2 *Chron.* 19. 2. *ſhouldſt thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the Lord, therefore is wrath upon thee from the Lord*; he reproves him ſharply for this confederacy, yet *Jehoſaphat* after had a ſignal providence in delivering him from another army, 2 *Chron.* 20. 24. Yet after this he goes on in this way 2 *Chron.* 20. 35. *after this i. e.* after a reproof by a prophet, after ill ſucceſs in his league, after eminent

* 2 Chron. 18. 1, 2, 3.

care

care of God in his deliverance, after a signal freeing him from a dangerous invasion in a miraculous way, he enters into a league with *Ahab's* Son as wicked as his Father, *vers.* 36. he joyned himself with him to make ships to go to *Tarshish*, and after that a third Prophet is sent to reprove him, and the Ships were broken, *vers.* 37. Here is a remarkable opposition to checks of providence, and manifest declarations of God's will, as if he would be the commander of the World instead of God. *Abner's* action is much of the same kind, who would make the house of *Saul* strong against *David*, though he knew and was satisfied that God had promised the Kingdom to *David*.

2. *In omissions of Prayer.* One reason to prove the fools denying God's government of the world, is, that they call not upon the Lord. *Psal.* 14. 1, 4. *The Lord looked down from Heaven to see if there were any that did understand and seek God.* 'Tis certainly either a denying of God's sufficiency to help us, when we rather beg of every Creature then ask of God, or a charging him with a want of providence, as though he had thrown off all care of worldly

worldly matters. 2 *King.* 1. 3. *Is it not becauſe there is not a God in Iſrael, that you go to enquire of Baalzebub the God of Ekron?* Seeking of any thing elſe with a neglect of God, is a denying the care of God over his Creature. Do we not in this caſe make our ſelves our own governours and Lords, as though we could ſubſiſt without him, or manage our own affairs without his aſſiſtance? If we did really believe there was a watchful providence, and an infinite powerful goodneſs to help us, he would hear from us oftener then he doth. Certainly thoſe who never call upon him, diſown his government of the world, and do not care whether he regards the Earth or no. They think they can do what they pleaſe without any care of God over them. The reſtraining prayer is a caſting off the fear of God. *Job.* 15. 4. *Thou caſteſt off fear*, why? *and reſtraineſt Prayer before God.* The neglect of prayer ariſeth from a conceit of the unprofitableneſs of it. *Job.* 21. 15. *What profit ſhould we have if we pray unto him?* Which conceit muſt be grounded upon a ſecret notion of God's careleſneſs of the world; ſuch fruit could

could not ariſe, but from that bitter root. But the Prophet *Malachi* plainly expreſſes it. *Malach.* 3. 14. *Ye have ſaid it is in vain to ſerve God, and what profit is it that we have kept his ordinance?* Whence did this ariſe, but from a denial of providence upon the obſervation of the outward happineſs of the wicked? *verſ.* 15. *And now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedneſs, are ſet up; yea, they that tempt God are even delivered.* Sometimes it riſeth from an apprehenſion that God in the way of his providence dealeth unjuſtly with us. A good Prophet utters ſuch a ſinful ſpeech in his paſſion. 2 *King.* 6. 33. *Behold, this evil is of the Lord, what ſhould I wait for the Lord any longer?*

3. *When men will turn every ſtone to gain the favourable aſſiſtance of men in their deſigns and never addreſs to God for his direction or bleſſing.* When they never deſire God to move the hearts of thoſe whoſe favour they court, as though providence were an unuſeful and unneceſſary thing in the World. It was the caſe of thoſe *Elihu* ſpeaks of, *Job.* 35. 9, 10. *they cry out by reaſon of the arm of the mighty, but none ſaith, where is God my Maker,*

who

who gives ſongs in the night, &c. none in the midſt of their oppreſſions and cryes under them did conſider either the power of God in the Creation, as he was their maker, nor his providence in the government of the World, as he raiſed up men from low eſtates, and gave matter of cheerfulneſs even in a time of darkneſs. This was the charge God by his Prophet brought againſt *Aſa*, 2 *Chron.* 16. 7. (before the text) *Thou haſt relyed on the King of Syria, and not relyed on the Lord thy God, herein thou haſt done fooliſhly. v.* 9. where he ſets a relyance on the Creature, and a relyance on God in direct oppoſition. In ſeveral caſes men do thus deny and put a contempt on God as the governour of the World, when we will caſt about to find out ſome Creature-refuge rat her then have recourſe to God for any ſupply of our neceſſities. Doth not he ſlight his fathers care that will not ſeek to him in his diſtreſs? This was *Aſah*'s Sin. 2 *Cron.* 16. 12. *in his diſeaſe he ſought not to the Lord but to the Phiſicians.* The *Jews* think, that one reaſon why *Joſeph* continued two years in priſon, was his confiding too much upon

the Butler's remembrance of him and intereſt for his deliverance, which they ground upon the requeſt he makes to him. *Gen.* 40. 14. *but think on me when it ſhall be well with thee, and ſhew kindneſs to me, and make mention of me unto Pharaoh, and bring me out of this houſe.* I muſt confeſs the expreſſions are very urgent, being ſo often repeated, and ſeems to carry a greater confidence at preſent in the arm of fleſh, then in God. We do not read that *Joſeph* prayed ſo earneſtly to God, though no doubt but being a good man he did: Methinks the ſetting down his requeſt with that repetition in the Scripture, ſeems to intimate a probability of the *Jews* conceit. Or alſo when we do ſeek to him, but it is out of a general belief of his providence and ſufficiency, not out of an actuated conſideration, or when we ſeek to him with colder affections then we ſeek to Creatures, as if we did half deſpair of his ability or will to help us: as when a man thinks to get learning by the ſagacity of his own wit, his indefatigable induſtry, and never deſires with any ardent affection the bleſſing of God upon his endeavours. When

we

we lean to our own Wiſdom, we diſtruſt the providence of God, 3 *Pro.* 5. *truſt in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not to thine own underſtanding.* Truſt in God and leaning to our own wiſdom, are oppoſed to one another as inconſiſtent; or when a man hath ſome great concern, ſuppoſe a ſuit at Law, to think to carry his cauſe by the favour of friends, the help of his money, the eloquence of his advocate, and never intereſts God in his buſineſs: This is not to acknowledge God in thy waies, which is the command, *Pro.* 6. *in all thy waies acknowledge him,* as though our works were not *in the hand of God, Eccleſ.* 9. 1. This is to take them out of God's hand, and put them into the hands of men. To truſt in our wealth, it is to make God a dead and a ſtupid God, and diſown his providence in the beſtowing it upon us. The Apoſtle ſeems to intimate this in the oppoſition which he makes between *uncertain riches* and the *living God.* * Theſe and many more actions ſutable to them, are vertual denyals of God's ſuper-intendency, as though God had left off the government of the World to the wits, or rather follies

* 1 *Tim.* 6. 17.

ſollies of men. Theſe are to magnifie the things we ſeek to above God, as the chief Anthors of all our good. 'Tis to imagine him leſs careful then man, more inſufficient then man. 'Tis a departure from a full fountain to a ſhallow ſtream; not to deſire God's aſſiſtance, is either from ſome check of conſcience that our buſineſs is ſinful, that we dare not intereſt him in it, or a diſowning God's care, as if we could hide our counſels from him, (*Iſa.* 29. 15. *Wo unto them that ſeek deep to hide their counſel from the Lord, and they ſay, who ſeeth us, and who knoweth us?*) and bring our buſineſs to paſs before he ſhall know of it; At leaſt it is a ſlighting God's government, ſince we will not engage God by prayer in the exerciſe of it on our behalf, and diſdain to acquaint him with our concerns. 'Tis a reflection upon God's wiſdom to do ſo, which the Prophet mentions with a woe, *Iſa.* 31. 1, 2. *Wo to them that go down to Egypt for help, but they look not to the holy one of Iſrael, yet he alſo is wiſe.* It is a diſparagement of God's providential wiſdom, not to look to him in our concerns, yea, and of his righteouſneſs too, *they look not to the*

holy

holy one of Iſrael. In this they neither regard his holineſs nor his wiſdom. When we conſult not with him upon emergent occaſions, we truſt more to our own Wiſdom, Counſel and Sufficiency then to God's, and ſet up our ſelves as our own Lords and independent upon him, as though we could manage things according to our pleaſure.

4, *When upon the receiving any good, they make a more grateful acknowledgment to the inſtruments, then to God the principal Author of it.* As if God had no hand in beſtowing thoſe bleſſings upon them, as if the inſtruments had diſpoſſeſſed God of his governing providence, and engroſt it in their own hands. This men are guilty of, when they aſcribe their Wealth to their own wit and fortune, their health to their own care, or the Phyſician's skill, their learning to their own induſtry, their proſperity to their friends or merits. When men thus return their thank-offering to ſecond cauſes, and aſcribe to them what is due to God, they give the glory of his providence to a miſerable Creature. Thus was the fooliſh boaſting of the *Aſſyrian. Iſa.* 10. 13, 14. By *the ſtrength of*

my hand I have done this, and by my wisdom, for I am prudent, for I have removed the bounds of the people, &c. *Belshazzar*'s offence also, *Dan.* 5. 23. *thou hast lifted up thy self against the Lord of Heaven, and praised the Gods of silver*, as though they were the authors of all thy greatness, so *Hab.* 1. 16. *they sacrifice to their net, and burn incense to their drag, because by them their portion is fat.* Alluding to those that then worshipped their warlike weapons, and the tools whereby they had got their wealth in the place of God, as the Heathen used to do. * How base a usage is this of God to rifle him of all his glory, and bestow it upon the vnworthiest instruments, inanimate Creatures: 'Tis as high Idolatry as that of the Heathens, in as much as it is a stripping God of the glory of his providential care, though the object to which we direct our acknowledgments, is not so mean as their's, which was a stock or stone. But is it not the same injury to a person to rifle him of his goods to bestow it upon a begger, as to give it to a Prince? 'Tis a depriving a man of his right: Yet, is not this ordinary! Do not men ascribe more to the Physician

*Dought *Analect. Sacr. Excurs.* 182.

* *Amirant de les religions.*

ſician that ſaves an eye in danger of being loſt by a defluxion, then to God who hath given them both with the enjoyment of the light of the Sun; yea more to the Medicine, then to that God, who hath a witneſs of his Deity in every Drug? 'Tis as if the kindneſs a Prince ſhews to his Subjects ſhould be attributed to a Scullian in his Kitchin, rather then to himſelf. This is to bely God and ſay it is not he: * 'Tis applicable to the caſe of mercies as well as afflictions and judgments, of which it is properly meant. And this contempt is the greater by how much the greater mercy we have received in a way of providence, *Hoſ.* 2. 8. *ſhe did not know that I gave her Corn and Wine and Oyl, and multiplyed her ſilver and gold, which they prepared for Baal.* She that had moſt reaſon to know, becauſe ſhe had enjoyed ſo much, ſhe that had experience how by a ſtrong and mighty hand I brought her out of *Egypt* into the Land now poſſeſſed by her. She would not know that I gave her thoſe good things ſhe prepared for *Baal.* It would be a natural conſequence from this Scripture, that thoſe that employ the good things they enjoy upon their luſts,

* *Jer.* 5. 12.

do deny the providential goodneſs of God in their poſſeſſion and enjoyment of them, becauſe they prepare God's goodneſs for their ſinful pleaſures, as though their own luſts had been the Authors of them; and alſo their inſtruments, that receive too high and flattering thanks of this nature, are much like *Herod*, that tickled himſelf with the Peoples applauſe, that his voice was the voice of God and not of man.

5. *When we uſe indirect courſes, and diſ-honeſt waies to gain wealth or honour.* This is to leave God, to ſeek relief at Hells gates, and adore the Devil's providence above God's: When God doth not anſwer us, like *Saul* we will go to the witch of *Endor*, and have our ends by Hell when Heaven refuſeth us. 'Tis a covenanting with the Devil, and ſtriking up a bargain and agreement with Hell, and acknowledging Satan to be the God of the World. No man will doubt but in expreſs Covenants with the Devil, as Witches and Conjurers are reported to make, that the Devil ſhall give them ſuch knowledge, ſuch wealth, or bring them to ſuch honour, 'tis no doubt, I ſay, but

but ſuch do acknowledge the Devil the God of the world, becauſe they agree by articles to have thoſe things conferred upon them by Satan, which are only in the power of God abſolutely to promiſe or beſtow. So when a man will commit Sin to gain the ends of his ambition or covetouſneſs, does he not implicitely covenant with the Devil who is the head of ſinners, and ſet up his ſin in the place of God, becauſe he hopes to attain thoſe things by ſinful means which are only in the hand of God, and on whom he only can have a dependance? This is the Devil's deſign out of an enmity to providence. He tempted Chriſt to be his own Carver, thereby to put him upon a diſtruſt of his Father's care of him, *Mat.* 4. 3. *Command that theſe ſtones be made bread*, as though God would not provide for him, which deſign of the Devil is manifeſt by our Saviour's anſwer. This is to proſtitute Providence to our own luſts, and to pull it down from the government of the World, to be a lacky to our ſinful pleaſure; to uſe means which God doth prohibit, is to ſet up Hell to govern us, ſince God will not govern our

affairs

affairs in answer to our greedy desires. 'Tis to endeavour that by God's curse which we should only expect by God's blessing: For when God hath forbid sinful waies, severely threatned them, perhaps cursed them in Examples before our eyes, what is it but to say, that we will rather believe God's curse will further us then his blessing? 'Tis to disparage his blessing, and prefer his curse, to slight his wisdom and adore our folly. When we go out of God's way, we go out of God's protection, we have no Charter for the blessing of providence without that condition, *Psal.* 37. 3. *trust in the Lord, and do good, so shalt thou dwell in the Land, and verily thou shalt be fed,* to do evil then is not to trust in God, or have any regard to his providential care.

6. *When we distrust God when there is no visible means.* A distrust of God renders him impotent or false and mutable, or cruel and regardless, and what not? We detract from his power, as if it depended upon Creatures, or that he were like an Artificer that could not act without his Tools: As if God were tyed to means, and were beholding to Creatures

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for his operating power; as if that God who created the World without inſtruments, could not providentially apply himſelf to our particular exigencies without the help of ſome of his Creatures. If he cannot work without this or that means you did expect your mercy by. It ſuppoſeth that God hath made the Creature greater then himſelf, and more neceſſary to thy well-being, then himſelf is; or elſe we conceit him falſe or fooliſh, as if he had undertaken a task of government too hard for him, as if he were grown weary of his labour, and muſt have ſometime to recruit his ſtrength, or as if he were unfaithful not walking by rules of unerring goodneſs; or if we acknowledge him wiſe and able and faithful, yet it muſt then be a denyal of his gracious tenderneſs, which is as great as his power and wiſdom, and a perfection equal with any of the reſt. If his careing for us be a principal argument to move us to caſt our care upon him as it is, 1 *Pet.* 5. 7. *caſting all your care upon him, for he careth for you*: Then if we caſt not our care upon him, it is a denial of his gracious care of us, this is to imagine him a tender-

tenderer governour of beasts then men, as though our Saviour had spoke a palpable untruth, when he told us, not an hair of our heads doth fall without his leave; as if he regarded Sparrows only, and not his Children; or else it implies that God cannot mind us in a crowd of business in such multitudes in the World, which he hath to take care of. But certainly, as the multitude of things doth not hinder his knowledge of them, so neither do they hinder his care. The arms of his goodness are as large to embrace all Creatures, as the eyes of his omniscience are to behold them. From this root do all our fears of the power of men grow, *Isa.* 51. 12, 13. *who art thou that art afraid of a man that shall dye*, &c. *and forgettest the Lord thy Maker, that hath stretched forth the Heavens*, &c. our forgetfulness at least, if not a secret denial of God's power in the works of Creation and Providence ushers in distrust of him, and that introduceth a fear of man. If they that know his name, will put their trust in him, *Psal.* 9. 10. *for thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee*; Then a distrust of him discovers an ignorance and inconsideration

of

of his name and his waies of working, and implies his forſaking of his Creature. He that truſts in any thing elſe beſides God, denies all the powerful operations of God, and conceives him not a ſtrength ſufficient for him, *Pſal.* 52. 7. that man doth not *make God his ſtrength, who truſts in the abundance of his riches.* How groſs is it not to truſt God under the very ſence of his powerful goodneſs, but queſtion whether he can or will do this or that for us? When we will have jealouſies of him when he doth compaſs us round about with mercy, and encircle us with his beams: 'tis to queſtion whether the Summer Sun will warm me, though it ſhine directly upon me, and I feel the vigor of its beams upon my Body: much more baſe is this, then to diſtruſt him when we have no means: What doth this imply, but that he cares not what becomes of his Children, that no advantage can be expected from him, that his intentions towards us are not gracious even whiles we feel him?

7. *Stoutneſs under God's afflicting or merciful hand is a denyal or contempt of providence.* This was the aggravation of

Belſhaz-

Belſhazzars Sin. *Dan.* 5.23. *and the God in whoſe hand thy breath is, and whoſe are all thy waies, haſt thou not glorified*; he glorified not God in the way of his providence, but was playing the Epicure, and was ſacrilegiouſly quaffing in the veſſels of the Temple when the City was beſieged; he ſeemed to dare the providence of God upon a preſumption that the City was impregnable by reaſon of *Euphrates* and the proviſion they had within their walls, which, *Xenophon* ſaith, was enough for Twenty years, yet was taken that night when the hand writing was. And by how much God's judgments have been more viſible to us, and upon ſome well known by us, or related to us, ſo much the greater is the contempt of his providential government, as *v.* 22. *and thou his Son Belſhazzar haſt not humbled thy heart, though thou kneweſt all this*, &c. he had known God's judgments upon his Grandfather *Nebuchadnezzar*, a Domeſtick example of God's vindicating his government of the World, and yet went in the ſame ſteps, ſo *Jer.* 5.3,4. *thou haſt conſumed them, but they have refuſed to receive correction, they have made their faces harder*

harder then a rock, what is the reaſon? the Prophet renders it. *v.* 4. *they are fooliſh, for they know not the way of the Lord, nor the judgment of their God.* Correction calls for ſubmiſſion, but thoſe like a Rock under God's hand, were correction proof, they would not conſider the ways of God's Providence, and the manner of them; 'tis as if by our peeviſhneſs we would make God weary of afflicting us, which is the worſt caſe can happen. This is God's complaint of the ten Tribes, *Hoſ.* 7. 9. *gray hairs* are upon them, and *they know it not, ſtrangers have devoured his ſtrength*, &c. there was a conſumption of their ſtrength, the *Aſſyrians* and *Egyptians* to whom they gave gifts, had drained their treaſure, but they would not conſider God as the Author, or acknowledge whence their miſery came, *they would not ſeek God for all this*, *v.* 10. 'Tis like a mans picking a pocket, or cutting a Throat under the Gallows in contempt of Juſtice; * whereas good men are both affected with, and remember God's judgments. *Eber* called his Son *Peleg*, diviſion, becauſe in his daies the Earth was divided, that in the dayly

* *Jenkin.*

ſight

ſight of the Sun he might remember that ſharp Providence in ſcattering of the *Babel*-builders. Judgments affect us when they are before our eyes, as the Thunder and Plagues did *Pharaoh*, but when they are removed, men return to their beloved ways as though God had ſhot away all his arrows, and was departed to mind them no more. Take heed of this, 'tis a ſin highly provoking: God is ſo tender that his providence ſhould be minded and improved, that a ſin of this nature he follows with his diſpleaſure in this life at leaſt, *Iſa.* 22. 12, 13. *And in that day did the Lord God of hoſts call to weeping and mourning, and behold joy, and gladneſs, eating Fleſh and drinking Wine, let us eat and drink, for to morrow we ſhall die.* When God in any judgment ſhews himſelf to be Lord *God of Hoſts*, and calls us to weeping, and we behave our ſelves jollily in ſpight of his government, it is a ſin he will remember, and bind the guilt upon us, *v.* 14. *and it was revealed in my Ears by the Lord of Hoſts, ſurely this iniquity ſhall not be purged from you till you die.*

8. *Envy alſo is a deniall of providence*, To be ſad at the temporal good or the gifts of another

ther, as counting him unworthy of them, it is a reflection upon the Author of those gifts, an accusing providence of an unjust or unwise distribution. * Since God may do what he will with his own, if our eye be evil, because God is good, we intrench upon his Liberty, and deny him the disposal of his own goods, as if God were but our Steward, and we his Lords. 'Tis a temper we are all subject to, *Psal.* 37. 1. *Fret not thy self because of evil doers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity.* 'Tis peculiarly the product of self-love, which affects the principality in the world, and particularly affects the conduct of God in distributing his goods that he must not give but to whom they please. It ariseth indeed from a sense of our wants; but the language of it is, God is unjust in his providence to me, because he bestows not upon me that good which he gives to another. 'Tis such a sin that it seems to be a companion of our first parents pride which was the cause of their fall. They envied God a felicity by himself, for they would be like him, *they would be as Gods.* Hence perhaps, the *Jews* say

* *Cajetan Summal.* p. 428.

Cain denied the providence of God, as envying his Brother, becauſe God accepted *Abel*'s ſacrifice and not his. *Jonah*'s paſſion aroſe from this pride for fear he ſhould be accounted a falſe Prophet, whereupon he envies God the glory of his mercy, and the poor *Niniviteſ* the advantage of it, he would have God conform the way of his providence to his pleaſure and reputation. Indeed it is to envy God the honour of his providence in thoſe gifts or good things another poſſeſſes, whereby he is inſtrumental to glorifie God and advantage others. Thus we would direct God what inſtruments he ſhould employ, when no Artificer in his own Art would endure to be directed by any ignorant perſon what tools he ſhould uſe in his work.

9. *Impatience under croſs providences is a denial and contempt of God's government.* Men quarrel with God's revealed will, and therefore no wonder that they quarrel with his providential will; whereby we deny him his right of governing, and ſlight his actual exerciſe of his right. As if God were accountable to us for his diſpenſations, and muſt have only a reſpect

reſpect to us or our humor in his government, *Job.* 18. 4. *he tears himſelf in his anger, ſhall the Earth be forſaken for thee? and ſhall the rock be removed out of his place?* Muſt God alter the ſcene of his affairs according to our model and platform, and becauſe he doth not obſerve our rules and methods, muſt we tear our ſelves in anger? This is a ſecret curſing of God and flying in his face when we ſee providence ſo croſs, that there ſeems to be no help at any time either in Heaven or Earth, *Iſa.* 8. 21, 22. *they ſhall fret themſelves and curſe their King and their God, and look upwards, and they ſhall look unto the Earth, and behold trouble and darkneſs:* Take heed of fretting at God's management of things in the world, or thy own particular concerns; this may lead to a curſing of God, and is indeed an initial ſecret ſwelling againſt him, and curſing of him. Man is ambitious to become a God. *Adam*'s poſterity have in one ſort or other imitated him. This

1. *Is a wrong to the Soveraignty of providence.* 'Twas a good admonition of *Luther*'s to *Melancton* when he was troubled much about the affairs of the

Church, *monendus eſt* Philippus *ut deſinat eſſe rector mundi.* By this temper we uſurp God's place, and ſet our ſelves in his Throne, we invade his ſupremacy by deſiring every thing to be at our beck, and are diſpleaſed with him, becauſe he doth not put the reins of the worlds government into our hands. As if we would command his will, and become his Soveraigns. 'Tis a ſtriving with our maker for the ſuperintendency, when we will ſit Judge upon him, or cenſure his acts, and preſume to direct him. *Iſa.* 45. 9. *Wo to him that ſtrives with his Maker, ſhall the clay ſay to him that faſhions it, what makeſt thou? or thy work, He hath no hands?* How do men ſummon God to the bar of their intereſt, and expoſtulate with him about his works, why he did not order them thus and thus; and if he doth ſo, to tell him he hath no hand, no hand of providence in the World? The deſign of that place is to ſtop ſuch peeviſhneſs and invaſions of God's right; I will not have my Soveraign Will diſputed, as if I were but the Creatures Servant; I am content you ſhould *ask of me things to come*, *v.* 11. and pray to me, but

but notwithſtanding yet to ſubmit to my pleaſure without a peeviſh endeavouring to wreſt the Soveraignty out of my hand, and pull the Crown from my head.

2. *'Tis a wrong to the goodneſs and righteouſneſs of providence.* 'Tis a charging God with ill management, and an implicit language, that if we were the commanders of providence, things ſhould be managed more juſtly and righteouſly; as it was *Abſalom's* pretence in wiſhing to be the King of *Iſrael* in *David's* ſtead, 2 *Sam.* 15. 4. If patience be a giving God the honour of his righteouſneſs in his judgments. *Pſal.* 119. 75. *I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulneſs haſt afflicted me*: Impatience muſt be a charge againſt God for unrighteouſneſs in his judicial proceedings, and a ſaying *the way of the Lord is not equal, Ezek.* 18. 25. 'Tis implied in that complaint, *Iſa.* 58. 2, 3. *They aſk of me the ordinances of Juſtice,* &c. *wherefore have we faſted and thou ſeeſt not? wherefore have we afflicted our Souls, and thou takeſt no knowledge?* We demand juſtice of thee, ſince thou doſt not ſeem to do that which

is fit and righteous, in not regarding us in our ſuits, and not beſtowing that which we have faſted for. God governs the World according to his will, our murmuring implies that God's will is not the rule of righteouſneſs. We affront the care of God towards his Creatures, as if the products of our ſhallow reaſons were more beautiful and juſt then God's contrivances for us, who hath higher and more glorious ends in every thing, both for our ſelves and the world, of which we are members, and for his own glory, to which we ought to ſubject our ſelves, when perhaps our projects tend immediately to gratifie ſome ſenſual or ſpiritual luſt in us. 'Tis the commendation the Holy Ghoſt gives of *Job*, *Job.* 1. 22. *in all this Job ſinned not, neither charged God fooliſhly*, as a Character peculiar to him, implying that moſt men in the World, do, upon any emergency, charge God with their croſſes, as dealing unjuſtly with them, in inflicting puniſhment when they think they have deſerved rewards: *Jeremiah* is not innocent in this caſe, *Jerem.* 20. 7. *O Lord, thou haſt deceived me, and I was deceived*, in

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the ill ſucceſs of his prophecy, as though an immenſe goodneſs would, and a Soveraign power needed to deal in a fraudulent way with his Creatures to bring his ends about.

3. *'Tis a wrong to the wiſdom of Providence.* We would degrade his omniſcience and wiſdom, and ſway him by our fooliſh and purblind dictates, 'tis as if we would inſtruct him better in the management of the world, and direct him to a reformation of his methods, *Job.* 40. 2. *ſhall he that contends with the Almighty, inſtruct him? He that reproves God, let him anſwer it:* 'Tis a reproving God, and reproofs imply a greater authority or righteouſneſs or wiſdom in the perſon reproving; we reprove God, as if God ſhould have conſulted with us, and asked our advice; 'tis to take upon us to be God's counſellors, and to conclude the only wiſe God by our imperfect reaſon, *Rom.* 11. 34. *Who hath been his Counſellor?* 'Tis a ſecret boaſting of ſome excellency in our ſelves, as if God did not govern well, or we could govern better: Shall a ſilly paſſenger, that underſtands not the uſe of the compaſs, be an-

gry that the skilful Pilot will not ſteer the Veſſel according to his pleaſure? Muſt we give out our orders to God, as though the Counſels of infinite wiſdom muſt roul about according to the conceits of our fancy? Is not the language of our hearts in our fits of impatience, as prodigiouſly proud againſt God's providence as the Speech of that monſter was againſt the creation, who ſaid if he had been by God at the Creation of the World, he could have directed him to a better platform; all this and much more is vertually in this ſin of impatience.

10. *In charging our ſins and miſcarriages by them, upon providence*, in this we contemn it. Some think *Cain* doth ſo, *Gen.* 4. 9. *am I my brother's keeper?* Thou art the keeper and governor of the World, why didſt thou not hinder me from killing my Brother? 'Tis certain the firſt man did ſo, *Gen.* 3. 12. *the woman thou gaveſt to be with me, ſhe gave me of the tree*; thy gift is the cauſe of my ſin and ruine. 'Tis as certain *David* laid the Sin of *Uriah*'s murder at the door of providence, 1 *Sam.* 11. 25. when he heard that *Uriah* was dead, *the Sword, ſaith he, devours one as well*

well as another. Man conjures up trouble to himſelf, when by his folly he brings himſelf into ſin, and from thence to miſery, and then *his heart frets againſt the Lord*, and layes the blame both of his ſin and following miſchiefs upon him, *Pro.* 19. 3. *the fooliſhneſs of man perverts his way, and his heart frets againſt the Lord.* There are many other wayes wherein we deny or ſlight providence.

1. *When we do things with a reſpect to the pleaſure of men more then of God.* As though God were careleſs both of himſelf and his own honour, and regarded not the principles and ends of our actions.

2. *In vain boaſting and vaunting of our ſelves.* As *Benhadad* would have ſuch a multitude of men in his army as that there ſhould not be duſt enough in *Samaria* to afford every man a handful; * wherein he ſwaggers with God, and vaunts as if he were the Governor of the World; yet this man with his numerous Hoſt was routed by a troop of Lacquies, *v.* 15, 20. they are called the young men of the Princes; ſuch is the folly of men againſt the orders of God, when

* 2 *King.* 20. 10.

when they boaſt in their hearts that
* Pſal. 49. 11. their houſe ſhall continue for ever. *

3. *Oppreſſion. They ſlay the fatherleſs,* and ſay, the God of *Jacob* ſhall *not regard*
* Pſal. 94. 6, 7. *it.* * Their denial of providence was the cauſe of their oppreſſion of the poor, and where this is found in any, it is an argument it ariſeth principally from a like cauſe; this is alſo made the cauſe why they eat up God's people as they eat
* Pſal. 14. 1. 4. bread. *

4. *Miſinterpretations of providence.* Such curſed jealouſies had the *Jews* of God. *Numb.* 14. 3. and *wherefore hath the Lord brought us into this land to fall by the ſword, were it not better for us to return into Egypt?* As though God in that mighty deliverance had cheated them with a deſign to deſtroy them in the wilderneſs, when one of thoſe plagues poured out upon *Pharaoh* being turned upon their heads, had deſtroyed them in *Egypt.* So fooliſh are they to think that God would ruine them upon dry Land, who might have drowned them as well as their enemies in the Red Sea: ſo unreaſonable is man in his diſputes againſt God.

5. *In limiting providence.* In bound-

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ing it to time, manner and other circumſtances as they did, *Pſal.* 78. 41. *they limited the holy one of Iſrael, for they remembred not his hand.* As though God muſt manage every thing according to the will of a ſimple Creature. It was a forgetfulneſs of providence, at leaſt, that was the cauſe of it.

The Second *Uſe* is of *Comfort.* As the juſtice and righteouſneſs of God is the higheſt comfort to a good man, ſince the Evangelical diſpenſation: In that he hath to deal with a righteous God, who can as ſoon deny himſelf as his righteouſneſs. So it is none of the meaneſt comforts, that we acknowledge and worſhip that God, who exerciſeth himſelf in a conſtant government of the World, and leaves not any thing to the capriciouſneſs of that which we call fortune and chance. What ſatisfaction can any man in his ſober wits have to live in a World caſt off from all care of the Creator of it? Wiſdom without providence would make any man mad, and the greateſt advantage would be to be a ſtupid and ſenſeleſs fool: Can there be any worſe News told to men then this, that let them be as religious as *uſe.* 2.

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they will, there is no eye above takes notice of it? What can be bitterer to a rational man then that God should be careless of the world? What a door would be opened by it for all sin in the wicked, and despair in the godly? 'Tis as great a matter of joy to the godly, that God reigns, as it is of terror to the wicked, *Psal.* 97. 1. *The Lord reigns, let the Earth rejoice, Psal.* 99. 1. *The Lord reigns, let the people tremble.*

* *It was an excellent Speech of a Stoick,* οὐκ ἐστὶ ζῆν ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ κινῷ θεῶν καὶ προνοίας.

'Tis a comfort, That,

1, *Man is a special object of providence.* God provides for all Creatures, even those that are the works of his hands, much more for man, who is more peculiarly the work of his head, in whose Creation he took Counsel, *Gen.* 1. 26. *let us make man in our Image, after our likeness.* The work of his heart in being made according to his Image, and intended as a subordinate end of his whole Creation next to the principal, that of God's glory, he is the preserver of man and beast: of man principally, of beasts in subserviency to mans good, and preservation.

2. *Holy men, a more special object of it.* God

God preſerves and provides for all things and all perſons: But his eye is more peculiarly fixed upon thoſe that fear him, *Pſal.* 33. 18. *behold, the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy,* ſo fixed, as if he had no regard to any thing elſe. If God hath a care of man created after his own Image, though his Image be depraved, much more of thoſe wherein his Image is reſtored. If God loves himſelf, he loves his Image and his works. A man loves the works which he hath made of ſome external matter, much more doth a father love his Son, much more doth God love his own, and therefore will work their good and diſpoſe of them well. God exerciſeth a ſpecial providence over the actions of a good man, as well as his perſon, *Pſal.* 37. 23. *the ſteps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, and he delighteth in his waies*; 'tis a ſpecial, becauſe a delightful providence, he delights in his way, how highly may it cheer a man to be in covenant with that God, which rules the world, and hath all things at his beck, to be under not only the care of his wiſdom, but of his goodneſs? The Governour

nor of the World; being such an only friend, will do him no hurt, being such an only Father will order all things to his good out of a Fatherly affection; he is the Worlds Soveraign, but a good mans Father: He rules the Heavens and the Earth, but he loves his holy ones. Other things are the objects of his providence, and a good man is the end of it. For, *his eyes run to and fro throughout the whole Earth, to shew himself strong for him whose heart is perfect toward him.*

3. Hence it will follow, that the *Spirits of good men have sufficient grounds to bear up in their innocent sufferings and storms in the World. Innocent sufferings,* There is a righteous Governor, who orders all, and will reward them for their pains, as well as their service, *Heb.* 6. 10. *for God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love*; there is one that presides in the World, who sees all their calamities, and cannot be mistaken in their cause, who hath as much power and wisdom, as will to help them. It would be an affliction indeed, if there were no soveraign power to whom they might make their moan in their distress, to whom they might

might eaſe their conſciences, if there were no Governor to whom they might offer up their petitions.

In the Storms they meet with in the world. How doth the preſence of a skilful Pilot in a weather-beaten Ship cheer the hearts of the fearful Paſſengers? What a dread would it be to them to have the veſſel wherein their lives and all are concerned, left to the fury of Winds and Waves, without an able hand to manage it? God hath a bridle to check the paſſions of men, to marſhal them according to his pleaſure; they are all but his inſtruments in the government, not the Lords of it: God can lay a Plot with more wiſdom for a good mans ſafety, then the Enemy can for his deſtruction; he can countermine their Plots with more power then they can execute them, he can out-wit their craft, over-power their ſtrength, and turn their deſigned cruelty againſt them, as a knife into their own breaſts.

4. *Hence follows a certain ſecurity againſt a good mans want.* If God take care of the hairs, the ornamental ſuperfluities, why ſhould we doubt his care of our neceſſary

ceſſary ſupply? If he be the guardian of our hairs which fall off without our ſence of their departure, ſhall he be careleſs of us when we are at a pinch for our all? Will God reach out his care to Beaſts, and deny it to his Children? What would you judge of that Father, who ſhould feed his Servants and ſtarve his Sons? He ſupplies his Enemies, and hath he no bowels for his Friends? The very unjuſt as well as the juſt are enlightned by his Sun, and refreſht by his rain, and ſhall he not have a providence for thoſe who have a ſpecial intereſt in that Mediator, whoſe interpoſition kept up thoſe ſtanding mercies after our forfeiture of them by ſin? If he bleſs with thoſe bleſſings, thoſe, who are the objects of his curſe, will he not bleſs thoſe that are in his ſpecial favour with them, ſo far as they may prove bleſſings to them? *Pſal.* 34. 10. *the young Lions do lack and ſuffer hunger, but they that ſeek the Lord, ſhall not want any good thing, v.* 9. *for there is no want to them that fear him.* A good man ſhall have what he needs, not alwaies what he thinks he needs. Providence intends the ſupply of our neceſſities, not of our

our deſires; he will ſatisfie our wants, but not our wantonneſs. When a thing is not needful, a man cannot properly be ſaid to want it; when it is needful, a good man ſhall not be without it; what is not beſtowed upon us, may not be ſo beautiful at that time wherein we deſire it, for every thing is *beautiful in its ſeaſon.* * He that did not want God's kindneſs to renew him, ſhall never want God's kindneſs to ſupply him; his hand ſhall not be wanting to give, where his heart hath been ſo large in working. Others live that have an intereſt only in common providence, but good men have providence cabinetted in a promiſe, and aſſured to them by a deed of covenant-conveyance, he was a provider before, he hath made himſelf now your Debtor. You might pray for his providential care, before, with a common faith, now with a more ſpecial expoſtulation: For in his promiſe he hath given a good man the key of the Cheſt of his providence, becauſe it is *the promiſe of this life and that which is to come*; * of this life not to our deſires, but neceſſities; of the life to come to both, wherein they ſhall have whatſo-

* Eccleſ. 9. 11.

* 1 Tim. 4. 8.

ever they can want, and whatſoever they can deſire.

Again conſider, God doth exerciſe a more ſpecial providence over men, as cloathed with miſerable circumſtances, and therefore among his other Titles, this is one, to be a helper of the Fatherleſs. * 'Tis the argument the Church uſed to expreſs her return to God, *Hoſ.* 14. 3. *for in thee the fatherleſs find mercy.* Now what greater comfort is there then this, that there is one preſides in the world, who is ſo wiſe he cannot be miſtaken, ſo faithful he cannot deceive, ſo pitiful he cannot neglect his people, and ſo powerful, that he can make ſtones even to be turned into bread, if he pleaſe?

* *Pſal.* 10. 14.

Further, take this for a comfortable conſideration,

God doth not govern the World only by his will as an abſolute Monarch, but by his wiſdom and goodneſs as a tender Father. 'Tis not his greateſt pleaſure to ſhew his Soveraign power, or his unconceivable wiſdom, but his immenſe goodneſs, to which he makes the other attributes ſubſervient. What was God's end in creating, is his end in governing, which was the

the communication and diffuſion of his goodneſs; we may be ſure from hence, that God will do nothing but for the beſt, his wiſdom appointing it with the higheſt reaſon, and his goodneſs ordering it to the moſt gracious end, and becauſe he is the higheſt good, he doth not only will good, but the beſt good in every thing he acts.

What greater comfort can there be, then that we are under the care of an infallible unwearied and righteous Governor; infallible becauſe of his infinite wiſdom, unwearied becauſe of his incomprehenſible omnipotency, and righteous becauſe of his unbounded goodneſs and holineſs.

3. *Uſe* of *Exhortation.*

The duties ariſing from hence, will run as a thread through the web of our whole lives, and all the motions of them; This Doctrine hath an influence upon our whole courſe, there is nothing we meet with, but is an act of Providence, and there is no act of providence, but calls for ſome particular duty. Is there any good we want, we muſt ſeek it at his hands, we muſt depend upon him

for it, we must prescribe no methods to him, but leave the conduct of it to his own wisdom. Is it a cross providence, and contrary to our desires and expectations? Murmur not at it. Is it afflictive and troublesom? Submit to it: Is it either good or bad and present, we must study to understand it: Is it a good & present? give God the glory of it.

1. *Seek every thing you need at the hands of God.* 'Tis not only the skilfulness of the Pilot, but a favourable gale from Heaven, which must conduct the Ship to the intended port. As his providence is the foundation, so it is the encouragement of all prayer. The end of the Lords prayer is, *for thine is the Kingdom, the Power and the Glory*: the providential Kingdom belongs to God, Power he hath to manage it, and his Glory is the end of all, seek to him therefore for the exercise of his power in thy concerns, and for his directing them to his glory in his providential administrations. Every one of our daies, and both the mercy and the misery of them depend upon him, *Pro.* 27. 1. *thou knowest not what a day may bring forth*, but God foresees all events, have recourse therefore to his care for every

very dayes ſucceſs; what are our contrivances without the leave and bleſſing of providence? Like the bubbles blown up from a nut-ſhell, eaſily broken by the next puff. Our labor will be as fruitleſs as *Peter's*, with all his toyl, and catch nothing, till God ſpeaks the word, and ſends the fiſh into our net. * The way of man is not in himſelf. * *O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himſelf, it is not in man that walks, to direct his ſteps.* Dangers are not within the reach of our eye to foreſee, nor within the compaſs of our power to prevent. Humane prudence may lay the platform, and God's power blaſt the execution, when it ſeems to be grown up neareſt to maturity. *Hezekiah* was happy in his affairs, becauſe he was aſſiſted by God; *Ahaz* unhappy, becauſe he is deſerted by God. If we would have a Clock go well, we muſt look chiefly to the motion of the chief Wheel; a failure in that makes an error in all the reſt: nothing can terminate its motion to our benefit without providence. Coloured glaſs can reflect no beams without the Sun's light, nor fruits be ripened without its influence. Our

* *Luk.* 5. 5.

* *Jer.* 10. 13.

dependance on God is greater then theirs on the Sun. God lets men play with their own wit and ſtrength, and come to the brink of execution of their deſigns, and then blows upon them, that they may know there is a God in the Earth. *Pythagoras* could ſay, it was γελοῖον a ridiculous thing, to ſeek that which is brave and virtuous any where elſe then of God. * *Cyrus* is a brave pattern, who is mentioned in Scripture, and repreſented by *Xenophon* calling upon God when he was firſt choſen General; and in his Speech to his Captains to encourage them to hope for a good ſucceſs of the expedition, tells them they might expect it, becauſe I have begun with God, which you know, ſaith he, is my cuſtom, not only when I attempt great matters, but alſo the τὰ μικρὰ things of leſſer concernment. The ſeeking of God ſhould be the prologue to all our affairs; we are enjoyned firſt to pray, and then determine, - *Job.* 22. 27. *Thou ſhalt make thy prayer unto him, thou ſhalt alſo decree a thing, and it ſhall be eſtabliſhed unto thee.* The intereſſing Providence in our concerns, is the high way to ſucceſs. The reaſon we miſcarry is becauſe we conſult not

* *Jamblich. vita Pithag. lib. 1. cap. 18. p. 89.*

Xenophon περὶ κύρου παιδ. lib. 1. p. 23.

not God, but determine without him; and then we have no reaſon to complain of him for not proſpering our way, when we never commended our affairs to his conduct. It hath been the practice of holy men. *Nehemiah* firſt petitioned God before he would uſe his intereſt in the Kings favour, *Nehem.* 2. 4. *then the King ſaid unto me, for what doſt thou make requeſt? So I prayed to the God of Heaven, and I ſaid unto the King*, &c. So *Abraham's* Steward puts up his requeſt to God, before he would put the buſineſs he came upon, in execution, *Gen.* 24. 12. *David* frequently in particular caſes. 1 *Sam.* 23. 9. 2 *Sam.* 2. 1. 2 *Sam.* 19. 23. God only doth what he pleaſes in Heaven and in Earth; He only can bleſs us, He only can blaſt us. Shall we be careleſs in any undertaking, whether we hath his favour or no? 'Tis a ridiculous madneſs to reſolve to do any thing without God, without whoſe aſſiſting and preſerving of us, we had not been able to make that reſolution.

2 *Truſt Providence.* To truſt God when our Ware-houſes and Bags are full, and our Tables ſpread, is no hard thing;

but to truſt him, when our purſes are empty, but a handful of meal and a cruſe of Oil left, and all wayes of relief ſtopt, herein lies the wiſdom of a Chriſtians Grace. Yet none are exempted from this duty; all are bound to acknowledge their truſt in him by the dayly prayer for dayly bread; even thoſe that have it in their Cupboards as well as thoſe that want it; The greateſt Prince as well as the meaneſt beggar. Whatever your wants are, want not faith, and you cannot want ſupplies. 'Tis the want of this binds up his hand from doing great works for his Creatures: The more we truſt him, the more he concerns himſelf in our affairs. The more we truſt our ſelves, the more he delights to croſs us; for he hath denounced ſuch an one curſed that maketh Fleſh his arm, * though it be the beſt Fleſh in the world, becauſe it is a departing from the Lord. No wonder then that God departs from us, and carries away his bleſſing with him; while we truſt our ſelves, we do but trouble our ſelves, and know not how to reconcile our various reaſons for hopes and fears; but the committing our way to the Lord

* Jer. 17. 5.

Lord renders our minds calm and compoſed, *Pro.* 16. 3. *commit thy works unto the Lord, and thy thoughts ſhall be eſtabliſhed*, Thou ſhalt have no more of thoſe quarrelling diſturbing thoughts, what the ſucceſs ſhall be.

1. *Truſt providence in the greateſt extremities.* He brings us into ſtraits, that he may ſee the exerciſe of our faith. *Zeph.* 3. 12. *I will leave in the midſt of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they ſhall truſt in the name of the Lord.* When we are moſt deſolate, we have moſt need of this exerciſe, and have the fitteſt ſeaſon to practiſe it: he is alwaies our refuge and our ſtrength, but in time of trouble a preſent help, *Pſal*, 46. 1. *Daniel's* new advancement by *Belſhazzar* but a day before the City was taken by the Enemy, * the King ſlain, and (no doubt) many of his nobility, and thoſe that were neareſt in Authority with him, it being the intereſt of the Enemy to diſpatch them, was a danger; yet God by wayes not expreſſed, preſerved *Daniel* and gave him favour with the Conqueror. God ſometimes leads his people into great dangers, that they may ſee and acknowledge his

* *Dan.* 5. 29.

his hand in their preſervation. *Daniel* had not had ſo ſignal an experience of God's care of him, had he been in the lower condition he was in before his new preferment. God's eye is alwaies upon them that fear him; not to keep diſtreſs from them, but to quicken them in it, and give them as it were a new life from the dead, *Pſal.* 33. 18, 19. *To deliver their Soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine.* God brings us into ſtreights, that we may have more lively experiments of his tenderneſs in his ſeaſonable relief: If he be angry, *he will repent himſelf for his Servants, when he ſees their power is gone*; becauſe then the glory of his providence is appropriated to himſelf, *Deut.* 32.36, 39. *See now that I, even I am he, and there is no God with me, I kill, and I make alive.* No Creature can have any pretence to ſhare in it; He delights thereby to blow up both our affections to him, and admirations of him, and ſtore up in us a treaſure of experiments to encourage our truſting in him in the like ſtreights. We ſhould therefore repoſe our ſelves in God in a deſart, as well as in the Cities: with as much

faith

faith among Savage beaſts, as in the beſt company of the moſt ſociable men. * And anſwer the greateſt ſtreight with *Abraham's* Speech to *Iſaac*, *God will provide.* For we have to do with a God who is bound up to no means, is at no expence in miraculous ſuccors, who delights to perfect his ſtrength in the Creatures weakneſs. We have to do with a God, who only knows what may further our good, and accordingly orders it; what may hinder it, and therefore prevents it. He can ſet all cauſes in ſuch a poſture, as ſhall conſpire together as one link to bring about ſucceſs, and make even contrary motions meet in one gracious end; as the Rivers which run from *North* and *South*, the contrary quarters of the world, agree in the ſurges of one Sea. Though providences may ſeem to croſs one another, they ſhall never croſs his word and promiſe, which he hath magnified above all his names. And his Providence is but a ſervant to his Truth.

* *Durant de Tentat. p.* 168.

2. *Truſt it in the way of means.* Though we are ſure God hath decreed the certain event of ſuch a thing, yet we muſt not encourage our idleneſs, but our diligence

ligence. Though *Moſes* was aſſured of the victory, when *Amaleck* came armed againſt him, yet he commands *Joſhua* to draw up the valiant men into a body, himſelf goes to the Mount to pray, and is as diligent in the uſe of all means, as if he had been ignorant of God's purpoſe, and had rather ſuſpected the rout of his own then his Enemies forces. Neither doth *Joſhua* afterwards, though ſecured by promiſe in his conqueſt of *Canaan*, omit any part of the duty of a wiſe and watchful General, he ſends ſpies, diſciplines his forces, beſiegeth Cities, and contrives ſtratagems. Providence directs us by means; not to uſe them, is to tempt our Guardian; where it intends any great thing for our good, it opens a door and puts ſuch circumſtances into our hands, as we may uſe without the breach of any Command, or the neglect of our own duty. God could have ſecured Chriſt from *Herod*'s fury, by a miraculous ſtroke from Heaven upon his Enemy, but he orders *Joſeph* and *Maries* flight into *Egypt* as a means of his preſervation. God rebukes *Moſes* for praying, and not uſing the means in continuing

ing the Peoples march, *Exod.* 14. 15. *Wherefore crieſt thou unto me? ſpeak unto the Children of Iſrael, that they go forwards.* To uſe means without reſpect to God, is proudly to contemn him, to depend upon God without the uſe of means, is irreligiouſly to tempt him, in both we abuſe his providence; In the one we diſobey him in not uſing the means, he hath appointed; in the other, preſumptuouſly impoſe upon him for the encouragement of our lazineſs. Diligence on our part, and the bleſſing on God's, *Solomon* joyns together, *Pro.* 10. 4. *The hand of the diligent makes rich,* but *v.* 22. *The bleſſing of the Lord maketh rich.* So *Eccleſ.* 9. 1. *Our works are in the hand of God*; our works, but God's bleſſing; God's bleſſing, but not without our works. It was the practice of good men. *Jacob* wreſtles with God to divert his Brother's fury, yet ſends a Preſent to his Brother to appeaſe him. * *David* truſts in the name of the Lord his God in his duel with *Goliah*, but not without his ſling: Our labour ſhould rather be more vigorus then more faint, when we are aſſured of the bleſſing of providence by the infallibility of the promiſe. * *Gen.* 32. 9, 13.

3. *Truſt*

3. *Truſt providence in the way of the precept.* Let not any relyance upon an ordinary providence induce you into any way contrary to the command. *Daniel* had many inducements from an appearance of providence to eat the Kings meat, his neceſſity of compliance in his captivity, probability of preferment by learning the wiſdom of the Countrey, whereby he might both have advanced himſelf, and aſſiſted his Countrey-men, the greatneſs of the conſideration for a Captive to be fed from the Kings Table, the ingratitude he might be accuſed of, for deſpiſing ſo kind a treatment; but none of theſe things moved him againſt a command, becauſe the Law of God forbad it, he would not eat of the King's meat. *Daniel* might have argued I may wind my ſelf into the King's favour, do the Church of God a great ſervice by my intereſt in him, which may be daſht in pieces by my refuſal of this kindneſs, but none of theſe things wrought upon him. No providences wherein we have ſeeming circumſtances of glorifying God, muſt lead us out of the way of duty; this is to rob God one way to pay him another.

Dan. 1. 8, 9, 10, &c. *but* Daniel *purpoſed in his heart that he would not defile himſelf with the portion of the Kings meat.*

God

God brought *Daniel*'s ends about, he finds favour with the Governour, his requeſt is granted, the ſucceſs is anſwerable, and all thoſe ends attained, which he might in a ſinful way by an ill conſtruction of providence have propoſed to himſelf, all which he might have miſſed of, had he run on in a carnal manner: This, this is the way to ſucceſs, *Pſal* 37. 5. *Commit thy way unto the Lord, truſt alſo in him, and he ſhall bring it to paſs.* Commit thy way to the guidance of his providence, with an obedience to his precept, and relyance on his promiſe, and refer all ſucceſs in it to God. If we ſet up our golden Calfs made of our own ear-rings, our wit and ſtrength and carnal prudence, becauſe God ſeems to neglect us, our fate may be the ſame with theirs, and the very duſt of our demoliſht Calf may be a bitter Spice in our drink as it was in theirs.

3. *Truſt him ſolely without preſcribing any methods to him*; Leave him to his wiſe choice, wait upon him becauſe he is a God of judgment, * who goes judiciouſly to work, and can beſt time the executions of his will. The wiſe God obſerves particular periods of time, for doing

* *Iſa.* 30. 18.

doing his great works. *John* 2. 4. *my hour is not yet come, woman, what have I to do with thee?* Which man is no competent Judge of: I will do this miracle, but the ſeaſon is not yet come wherein I will be moſt beautiful. God hath as much wiſdom to pitch the time of performance of his promiſe, as he had mercy at firſt to make it; How preſumptuous would it be for the ſhallow world, a thing worſe then nothing, and vanity, to preſcribe rules to the Creator: Much more for a ſingle perſon a little Atome of duſt, infinitely worſe then nothing, and vanity, to do it? Since we had no hand in Creating the world or our ſelves, let us not preſume to direct God in the government of it, *Job.* 38. 4, *Where waſt thou when I laid the foundations of the Earth, declare if thou haſt underſtanding?* Would it not be a diſparagement to God to ſtoop to thy fooliſh deſires, yea, would you not your ſelves have a lower conceit of him, if he ſhould degrade his wiſdom to the wrong biaſs of your blind reaſon?

Thirdly, *Submit to providence.* 'Tis God's right to govern the World, and diſpoſe of his Creature; 'tis his Glory in Heaven

heaven to doe what he will, * let us not by our unſubmiſſive carriage deprive him of the ſame Glory on earth; he brings to paſs his will by wayes the Creature cannot underſtand. 'Tis the wiſeſt ſpeech in that medley of fooleries, the *Turkiſh Alcoran.*† We muſt walk by the rule of reaſon which God hath placed in us for our guide; yet if Providence brings to paſs any other event contrary to our rational expectations, becauſe it is a clear evidence of his will, we muſt acquieſce. As when a Traveller hath two wayes to come to his journeys end, the one ſafe, the other dangerous, reaſon perſwades him to chuſe the ſafeſt way, wherein he falls among thieves; now having uſed his reaſon, which in that caſe was to be his director, he muſt acquieſce: God's Providence bringeth forth an event, which he could not without violence to his reaſon avoid. And therefore it is a great vanity, when a man hath reſolved the moſt probable way in a buſineſs, and fails in it, to torment himſelf, becauſe though our conſultations depend upon our ſelves, yet the iſſues of them are ſolely in the hand of God. It concerns us

* *Pſal.* 115.3. *But our God is in the Heaven, he hath done whatſoever he pleaſed.*

† *Deus triumphat in ſua cauſa*, &c.

therefore to ſubmit to Gods diſpoſal of us and our affairs, ſince nothing can come to paſs but by the will of God effecting it or permitting it. If the fall of a Sparrow is not without his Will, * much leſs can the greater events which befall men the nobler Creatures, be without the ſame concurrence of Gods pleaſure; therefore ſubmit, For,

* *Matth.* 10. 29.

1. *Whatſoever God doth, he doth wiſely.* His acts are not ſudden and raſh, but acts of Counſel, not taken up upon the preſent poſture of things, but the reſolves of Eternity. As he is the higheſt wiſdom, ſo all his acts reliſh of it, and he guides his will by Counſel, *Eph.* 1. 11. [*Who worketh all things after the Counſel of his own will.*] If God took Counſel in Creating the World, much more in laying a platform of government, much more in the act of government; for men can frame models of government, that can never reduce them into practice. Now God being infinitely wiſe, and his will infinitely good, it muſt needs be that goodneſs and wiſdom are the rules whereby he directs himſelf in his actions in the world. And what greater motive can there

there be to perſwade our ſubmiſſion, then Wiſdom and Goodneſs tranſacting all things? Gods counſel being the firmeſt, as well as the wiſeſt, it is a folly both wayes to reſiſt it.

2. *God diſcovers his mind to us by providences.* Every work of God being the reſult of his Counſel, when we ſee it actually brought forth into the World, what elſe doth it diſcover to us, but that Counſel and will of his? Every ſingle providence hath a language wherein Gods mind is ſignified, much more a train and contexture of them, *Luk.* 7. 22. *tell John what things you have ſeen and heard, how that the blind ſee, the Lame walk, the Leapers are cleanſed, the deaf hear, the dead are raiſed to life, to the poor the Goſpel is preached.* Our Saviour informs *John's* Diſciples from acts of providence, he gives him no other anſwer, but turns him over to interpret and conſtrue his works in the caſe. Providence therefore muſt not be reſiſted, when Gods mind in it is diſcovered: 'Tis diſingenuous to act againſt his pleaſure and manifeſt mind; 'tis the Devils ſin. *Aaron* when he loſt his two Sons, in ſo judicial a manner by

* *Levit.* 10. 1, 2, 3. Fire from Heaven, yet held his peace; * becauſe God had declared his mind poſitively, *I will be glorified.* 'Tis dangerous to reſiſt the mind of God, for the word of his providence ſhall proſper in ſpight of Men and Devils, *Iſa.* 55. 11. *My word that goes forth of my mouth, ſhall not return unto me void, it ſhall proſper in the thing whereto I ſent it,* and therefore a reſiſting of it is termed θεομαχία, a fighting againſt God by *Gamaliel*, no great friend to the Church, *Acts.* 5. 38, 39.

4. *Murmur not at providence.* Though we do not clearly reſiſt it, if there be a repining ſubmiſſion, it is a partial oppoſition to the Will of God. We might as well murmur at God's creation, as at his providence, for that is as arbitrary as this, he is under no Law but his own righteous will: we ſhould therefore leave the government of the world to God's wiſdom as we acknowledge the frame of it to be an act of his power. If God ſhould manage his wayes according to our preſcriptions, what ſatisfaction would God have, what ſatisfaction would the world have? He might be unjuſt to himſelf, and unjuſt to others. Your own complaints would not

not be ſtilled, when you ſhould feel the ſmart of your own Counſels; yet if they were, what ſatisfaction could there be to the complaints of others, whoſe intereſts and therefore judgments and deſires lye croſs to yours? Man is a croſs Creature. The *Iſraelites* exclaimed to God againſt *Pharaoh*, and when the Scene was changed, they did no leſs murmur againſt *Moſes* in the wilderneſs. They were as troubleſom when they were delivered, as when they were afflicted. In *Egypt* they would have their liberty, and in the Wilderneſs their ſtomachs turn, and they long for the Onyons and Garlick, though attended with their former ſlavery. Let God govern the World according to his own Wiſdom and Will, till all mankind can agree in one method to offer to him, and that I think will never be, though the world ſhould laſt for ever. Murmur not therefore; whatſoever is done in the world, is the work of a wiſe agent, who acts for the perfection of the whole univerſe, and why ſhould I murmur at that which promotes the common happineſs and perfection, that being better and more deſirable, then

the perfection of any one particular person? Muſt a Lutineſt break all his ſtrings, becauſe one is out of tune? And muſt God change his courſe becauſe things are out of order with one man, though in regard of divine providence things are not out of order in themſelves, or without any care, for God is a God of order? This temper will hinder our prayers, with what face can we pray to that God whoſe wiſdom we thus repine at? If God doth exerciſe a providence in the World, why do we murmur? if he doth not take care of thoſe things, why do we pray to him? 'tis a contradiction. It alſo hinders us from giving God the glory, and our ſelves the comfortable ſight of his providence. God may have taken ſomething from us, which is the matter of our ſorrow, and given another thing to us, which might be the matter of our joy. *Jacob* loſt a joint, and got a bleſſing: * What advantage can it be to murmur? Can all your cryes ſtop the motions of the Heavens, when a ſtorm reaches you? Can your clamours make the clouds move the faſter, or perſwade the ſhowers from drenching us?

* *Gen.* 32. 29, 31.

Murmur-

Murmuring at any afflictive providence, is the way to make the Rod ſmarter in it ſelf, and ſharper to us.

5. *Study providence.* 'Tis a part of *Atheiſm* not to think the acts of God in the World worth our ſerious thoughts. And if you would know the meaning of his adminiſtrations, grow up in the fear of God, *Pſal.* 25. 14. *The ſecret of the Lord is with them that fear him.* God is highly angry with thoſe that mind him not, *Pſal.* 28. 5. *becauſe they regard not the operation of his hands, he ſhall deſtroy them, and not build them up:* He ſhall utterly root them out.

1 *Study providence univerſally.* The *darkeſt*; God brings order out of the Worlds confuſion, even as he framed a beautiful Heaven and Earth out of a rude Maſs. The *terribleſt*; theſe offer ſomething worth our obſervation, the dreadful providence of God makes *Sodom* an example to after ages. *Jude* 7. *They are ſet forth for an example, ſuffering the vengeance of eternal fire,* &c. The *ſmalleſt*; God is a wiſe agent, and ſo the leaſt of his actions are ſignificant. There is nothing ſuperfluous in thoſe acts, we account the

meaneſt; for to act vainly and lightly, argues imperfection, which cannot be attributed to God. The wiſdom of God may be much ſeen in thoſe providences the blind Word counts ſmall; as a little picture is oft times of more value, and hath more of the workman's skill then a larger which an ignorant perſon might prize at a higher rate; the Lilies, Flowers, Sparrows, our Saviour raiſes excellent obſervations from.

2. *Regularly.* By the word; compare providence and the promiſe together. God's manner of adminiſtrations, and the meaning of them is underſtood by the word, *Pſal. 77. 13. Thy way, O God, is in the Sanctuary.* By faith; we many times correct our ſence by reaſon, when we look through a blew or green glaſs, and ſee all things blew or green, though our ſenſe repreſents them ſo, yet our reaſon diſcovers the miſtake; Why ſhould we not correct reaſon by faith? Indeed our purblind reaſon ſtands in as much need of a regulation by faith, as our deceitful ſence doth of a regulation by reaſon. We may often obſerve in the Goſpel, that the holy Ghoſt taking notice of the particular circumſtances

cumſtances in the bringing Chriſt into the World, and in the courſe of his life, often hath thoſe expreſſions, *as it was written: that the Scriptures might be fulfilled.* There is not a providence happens in the World, but there are ſome general rules in the World, whereby we may apprehend the meaning of it. From God's former work diſcovered in his word, we may trace his preſent foot-ſteps: Obſerve the timings of providence wherein the beauty of it appears, ſince *God hath made every thing beautiful in its time.*

3. *Intirely.* View them in their connexion. A harſh touch ſingle would not be pleaſing, but may rarely affect the conſort: The providences of God bear a juſt proportion to one another, and are beautiful in their intire Scheme, but when regarded apart, we ſhall come far ſhort of a delightful underſtanding of them. As in a piece of Arras folded up, and afterwards particularly opened, we ſee the hand or foot of a man, the branch of a tree, or if we look on the outſide, we ſee nothing but knots and threads and uncouth ſhapes that we know not what to make of; but when it is fully opened, and we have the whole

whole Webb before us, we ſee what Hiſtories and pleaſing characters are interwoven in it. View them in their end; there is no true judgment to be made of a thing in motion, unleſs we have a right proſpect of the end to which it tends. Many things which may ſeem terrible in their motion, may be excellent in their end. Providence is crowned by the end of it. *Aſaph* was much troubled about the proſperity of the wicked, and affliction of the Godly, but he was well ſatisfied when he underſtood their end, which was the end of Providence too, *Pſal.* 73. 16, 17. *When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me, until I went into the Sanctuary, then underſtood I their end.* *Moſes* his Rod was a Serpent in its motion upon the ground, but when taken up, it was a Rod again to work miracles. God ſet us a pattern for this in the Creation. He views the Creatures as they came into being and pronounced them *good*, he takes a review of them afterward in their whole frame, and the ſubordination of them to one another, and the ends he had deſtined them to, and then pronounceth them *very good*; The merciful providences

vidences of God if ſingly looked upon, will appear good, but if reviewed in the whole web, and the end of them, will commence very good in our apprehenſions.

4. *Calmly.* Take heed of paſſion in this ſtudy, that is a miſt before the eye of the mind; ſeveral pleaſures alſo diſturb and ſtiffle the nobler operations of the intellective part, and all improving thoughts of Gods providence, *Iſa.* 5. 12. *And the Harp and the Viol and Wine are in their feaſts, but they regard not the work of the Lord, nor conſider the operations of his hands*; All thoughts of them are choaked by the pleaſures of ſenſe. Paſſions and ſenſual pleaſures are like flying clouds in the night, interpoſing themſelves between the ſtars and our eyes, that we cannot obſerve the motions of them. Turbulent paſſions or Swiniſh pleaſures prevailing, obſcure the providence of God. Our own humour and intereſt we often make the meaſures of our judgment of providence: *Shimei*, when *Abſalom* rebells againſt his father, looks no further then his own intereſt, and therefore interprets it as a judgment of God in revenging the houſe of

of *Saul*. 2 *Sam*. 16. 7, 8. *The Lord hath returned upon thee all the blood of the house of Saul, in whose stead thou hast raigned*. Therefore the Spirit of God takes particular notice that he was of the house of *Saul*, *v*. 5. when indeed this judgment was quite another thing, for *David*'s sin in the matter of *Uriah*, was written in the forehead of it.

5. *Seriously*. 'Tis not an easie work, for the causes of things are hid as the seminal virtues in plants, not visible till they manifest themselves. Providence is God's Lanthorn in many affairs, if we do not follow it close, we may be left in the dark, and lose our way. With much Prayer, For we cannot of our selves find out the reason of them; being shallow Creatures, we cannot find out those infinite wise methods God observes in the managing of them; but if we seriously set to work, and seek God in it; God may inform us, and make them intelligible to us. Though a man may not be able of himself to find out the frame and motions of an Engine, yet when the Artificer hath explained the work, discovered the intent of the Fabrick, it may be easily understood; If it

be

be dark, whilſt you ſeriouſly muſe on it, God may ſend forth a light into you, and give you an underſtanding of it, *Mat.* 1. 20. *Joſeph thought* of thoſe things, and whilſt he thought on them, *the Angel of the Lord appeared to him* in a dream; God made them known to him. The *Iſraelites* ſaw God's acts in the bulk of them, but *Moſes* ſaw his way and the manner how he wrought them, *Pſal.* 103. 7. *He made known his wayes unto Moſes, his acts unto the Children of Iſrael. Moſes* had more converſe with God then they, and therefore was admitted into his ſecrets.

6. *Holily.* With a deſign to conform to that duty providence calls for. Our motions ſhould be according to the providence of God, when we underſtand the intent of them. There is a call of providence, *Iſa.* 22. 12. *In that day the Lord called to weeping and mourning*; Sometimes to ſorrow, ſometimes to joy. If it be a providence to diſcover our ſin, let us comply with it by humiliation; if it be to further our grace, ſuit it by lively and freſh actings. As the ſap in plants deſcends with the Sun's declination, and aſcends at the return of the Sun from the Tropick; there

there are ſeveral graces to be exerciſed upon ſeveral acts of providence; either publick to the Church and Nation, or particular to our own perſons. Sometimes faith, ſometimes joy, ſometimes patience, ſometimes ſorrow for ſin. There are ſpiritual leſſons in every providence, for it doth not only offer ſomething to be underſtood, but ſomething to be practiſed, *Mark* 10. 15. A Child is brought to Chriſt, and Chriſt from thence teaches them a leſſon of humility. *Luk.* 13. 1, 2, 3. When Chriſt diſcourſes of that ſad providence of the blood of the *Galileans*, and the Tower of *Siloa*, he puts them upon the exerciſe of repentance. The Ruler enquired the time when his Son began to recover, that his faith in Chriſt might be confirmed, for upon that circumſtance it did much hang; and in doubtful caſes after a ſerious ſtudy of it, and thou knoweſt not which way to determine, conſider what makes moſt for God's glory and thy ſpiritual good, for that is the end of all: Let us therefore ſtudy providence; not as Children do Hiſtories, to know what men were in the World, or to pleaſe their fancy only, but as wiſe men, to underſtand the

the motions of ſtates, and the intrigues of Counſels; to enrich them with a knowledge whereby they might be ſerviceable to their Countrey. So let us enquire into the Providence of God to underſtand the mind of God, the intereſt of the Church, the wiſdom and kindneſs of God, and our own duty in conformity thereunto.

6. *Aſcribe the Glory of every providence to God.* *Abraham's* Steward petitioned God at the beginning of his buſineſs, *Gen.* 24. 12. and he bleſſes God at the ſucceſs of it, *ver.* 26, 27. We muſt not thank the tools which are uſed in the making an engine, and aſcribe unto them what we owe to the Workmans skill: Man is but the inſtrument, God's Wiſdom is the Artiſt. Let us therefore return the Glory of all where it is moſt rightly placed: We may ſee the difference between *Rachel* and *Leah* in this reſpect, when *Rachel* had a Son by her maid *Bilhah*, ſhe aſcribes it to God's care, and calls his name *Dan*, which ſignifies judging, *Gen.* 30. 6. *God hath judged me, and heard my voice.* That the very Name might put her in remembrance of the kindneſs of God in anſwering her prayer. And the next *Naphtali*, ſhe

ſhe eſteems as the fruit of prayer, *verſ.* 8. Whereas *Leah* takes no notice of God, but vaunts of the multitude of her Children, *verſ.* 11. behold *a troop comes.* She impoſeth the name of *Gad* upon them, which alſo ſignifies *fortune* or *good luck.* And the next *Aſher*, *verſ.* 13. which is fortunate or bleſſed. And we find *Leah* of the ſame mind afterward, *verſ.* 17. It is ſaid God harkned unto her, ſo that her Son *Iſſachar* was an anſwer of Prayer; but ſhe aſcribes it to a lower cauſe which had moved God; becauſe ſhe had given her maid to her Husband. *verſ.* 18. *Not unto us, not unto us, O Lord, but to thy name be the glory.*

Doct. 2. *All the motions of providence in the World are ultimately for the good of the Church; of thoſe whoſe heart is perfect towards him.* Providence follows the rule of Scripture. Whatſoever was written, was written for the Churches comfort.* Whatſoever is acted in order to any thing written, is acted for the Churches good. All the providences of God in the World are conformable to his declarations in his word. All former providences were ultimately in order to the bringing a Mediator into the World, and for the glory of him; then ſurely

* *Rom.* 15. 4.

ſurely all the providences of God ſhall be in order to the perfecting the Glory of Chriſt in that myſtical body, whereof Chriſt is head, and wherein his affection and his Glory are ſo much concerned. See the Proof of this by a Scripture or two. *Pſal.* 25. 10. *All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth unto ſuch as keep his Covenant and his Teſtimonies.* Not one path, but [*all*] the works and motions; not one particular act or paſſage of providence, but the whole tract of his proceedings; not only thoſe which are more ſmooth and pleaſant, but thoſe which are more rugged and bitter. All [*mercy and truth*] ſutable to that affection he bears in his heart to them, and ſutable to the declaration of that affection he hath made in his promiſe. There is a contexture and a friendly connexion of kindneſs and faithfulneſsin every one of them. They both kiſs and embrace each other in every motion of God towards them. As mercy made the Covenant, ſo truth ſhall perform it. And there ſhall be as much mercy as truth in all Gods actings towards thoſe that keep it, *Rom.* 8. 28.

We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose; [*we know*] we do not conjecture or gueſs ſo, but we have an infallible aſſurance of it. [*All things*] even the moſt frightful, and ſo thoſe that have in reſpect of ſenſe, nothing but Gall and Wormwood in them; [*work together*] they all conſpire with an admirable harmony and unanimous conſent for a Chriſtian's good. One particular act may ſeem to work to the harm of the Church, as one particular act may work to the good of wicked men: but the whole ſeries and frame of things combine together for the good of thoſe that are affectionate to him. Both the Lance that makes us bleed, and the plaiſter which refreſheth the Wounds. Both the griping purges and the warming Cordials combine together for the Patients cure [*to them who are called according to his purpoſe.*] Here the Apoſtle renders a reaſon of this poſition; becauſe they are called not only in the general amongſt the reſt of the world, to whom the Goſpel comes; but they are ſuch that were in

Gods

Gods purpoſe and counſel from Eternity to ſave, and therefore reſolved to encline their will to Faith in Chriſt, Therefore all his other Counſels about the affairs of the world ſhall be for their good. Another reaſon of this, the Apoſtle intimates, *verſ.* 27. *The Spirit makes interceſſion for the Saints according to the will of God.* The interceſſions of the Spirit which are alſo according to Gods will and purpoſe, will not be fruitleſs in the main end, which both the intereceſſions of the Spirit and purpoſe of God, and the will and deſire of the Saints do aim at, which is their good. Indeed where any is the object of this grand purpoſe of God, he is the object of God's infinite and innumerable thoughts, *Pſal.* 40. 5. *Many, O Lord my God, are thy wonderful works which thou haſt done, and thy thoughts which are to-us-ward, they cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee; if I would declare and ſpeak of them, they are more then can be numbred.* The Pſalmiſt ſeems to intimate that in all the wonderful works which God hath done, his thoughts are toward his people. He thinks of them in all his actions; and

thoſe thoughts are infinite and cannot be numbred, and reckoned up by any Creature. He ſeems to reſtrain the thoughts of God towards his people in all thoſe works of wonder which he doth in the World, and which others are the Subjects of: But his thoughts or purpoſes and intentions in all (*for the word ſignifies purpoſes too*) are chiefly, next to his own glory, directed toward his people, thoſe that truſt in him, which *verſ.* 4. he had pronounced bleſſed. They run in his mind as if his heart was ſet upon them, and none but them.

Here I ſhall premiſe two things as the ground work of what follows.

1. *God certainly in all his actions has ſome end*, that is without queſtion, becauſe he is a wiſe agent; to act vainly and lightly is an evidence of imperfection, which cannot be aſcribed to the only wiſe God. The Wheels of Providence are full of Eyes. * There is motion and aknowledge of the end of that motion. And Jeſus Chriſt who is Gods Deputy in the providential government, hath Seven Eyes, as well as Seven Horns, * a perfect ſtrength, and a perfect knowledge how

* *Ezek.* 1. 18.

* *Revel.* 5. 6.

how to uſe that ſtrength, and to what end to uſe it. Seven being the number of perfection of Scripture.

2. *That certainly is Gods end which his heart is moſt ſet upon, and that which is laſt in execution.* What doth God do at the folding up of the World, but perfect his people, and welcome them into Glory? Therefore God principally next to himſelf loves his Church. The whole Earth is his, but the Church is his treaſure, *Ex.* 19. 5. *If you will keep my Covenant, then ſhall you be a peculiar treaſure unto me above all people, for all the Earth is mine, Segullah* ſuch a treaſure, that a Man, a King will intruſt in no hands but his own; *all the Earth is mine*, is not a reaſon why the Church was his treaſure, but an incentive of thankfulneſs, that when the whole Earth was his, and lay before him, and there were many people that he might have choſen and loved before them, yet he pitched upon them to make them his choiceſt treaſure. And when the bleſſed God hath pitched upon a people, and made them his treaſure, what he doth for them is with his whole heart, and with his whole Soul, *Jer.* 32. 41, 42. ſpeaking of making an ever-

lasting Covenant, he adds, *yea I will rejoyce over them to do them good*, &c. *assuredly with my whole heart, and with my whole Soul.* As though God minded nothing else but those people he had made an everlasting Covenant with; which is the highest security, and most pregnant expression of his affection that can be given to any, not to give them a parcel or moiety of his heart, but the whole infinite intire piece, and to engage it all with the greatest delight in doing good to them. That infinite heart of God, and all the contrivances and workings of it center in the Churches welfare. The World is a Wilderness, but the Church is a Garden. If he water the Wilderness, will he not much more dress his Garden? If the flights of Birds be observed by him, shall not also the particular concernments of the Church? He hath a repository for them and all that belong to them; He hath a book of Life for their Names, * a book of Record for their members, * a Note-book for their Speeches, *Mal.* 3. 16. *A book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord;* And a book of providence for their preservation,

* *Luk.* 10. 20.
* *Psal.* 139. 16.

tion, *Exod.* 32. 32. In the profecution of this, I ſhall ſhew

1. That it is ſo *de facto*, and hath been ſo. *First.*

2. That according to the ſtate of things and Gods Oeconomy it muſt be ſo. *Secondly.*

3. The improvement of it, By way of *Uſe*. *Thirdly.*

1. That all providence is for the good of the Church *de facto*, and has been ſo. *First.*

1. It will appear by an enumeration of things. *Reaſon first,*

Firſt, All good things.

Secondly, All bad things are for their good.

Firſt, All good things.

I. The World.

II. Gifts and common graces of men in the World.

III. Angels.

I. The World, The whole World was made and ordained for the good of the Church next to the glory of God. This will appear in three things. *First.*

1. *The continuance of the World is for their ſakes.* God would have deſtroyed the World becauſe of the ignorance and

wickedneſs of it before this time, but he overlooked it all, and had reſpect to the times of Chriſt and the publiſhing faith in him, and repentance, *Act.* 17. 30. *And the times of this ignorance God winked at*, God overlooked,* he looked not ſo upon them, as to be provoked to deſtroy the world; but his eyes were fixed on the times of Chriſtianity; therefore would not take notice in the extremity of his juſtice of the wickedneſs of thoſe foregoing ages. Believers are the Salt of the Earth,* which makes the World ſavoury to God, and keeps it from corrupting. 'Tis meant not only of the Apoſtles, but of Chriſts Diſciples, of all Chriſtians, for to them was that Sermon made, *v.* 1. *If the Salt have loſt his ſavour*, if the Salt be corrupted, and Chriſtianity overthrown in the World, wherewith ſhall the World be ſalted; how can it be kept from corruption? If they that perſecuted the Prophets before you in *Judæa*, (which is ſometimes called the Earth in Scripture) can not reliſh you, and find nothing grateful to their Palates in your Doctrine and Converſation, wherewith ſhall they be ſalted? How ſhall they be preſerved from

* *vmer dir.*

* *Mat.* 5. 13.

from corruption? The Land will be good for nothing but to be given as a prey to the *Romans* to be trod under their feet, as being caſt out of Gods protection. They are the foundation of the world, *Pro.* 10. 25. *the righteous are an everlaſting foundation. Maimonides* underſtands it thus, that the World ſtands for the righteous ſakes. When God had *Noah* and his Family lodged in the Ark, he cares not what deluge and deſtruction he brings upon the reſt of the World. When he had conducted *Lot* out of *Sodom*, he brings down that dreadful ſtorm of fire. He cares for no place, no nor for the whole World any longer then whilſt his people are there, or he hath ſome to bring in in time. For the meaneſt believer is of more worth then a world; therefore when God hath gathered all together, he will ſet fire upon this frame of the Creation: For what was the end of Chriſts coming and dying, but to gather all things together in one. *Eph.* 1. 10. *That in the diſpenſation of the fulneſs of time he might gather together in one all things in Chriſt.* When Chriſt hath ſummed up all together, he hath attained his end. Grotius *on the place.*

And

And to what purpoſe then can we imagine God ſhould continue the World any longer; for his delight is not ſimply in the World, but in the Saints there. *Pſal.* 16. 3. *But to the Saints that are in the Earth, in whom is all my delight*, not in the *Earth*, but in the *Saints* there, which are the only excellent things in it, which Chriſt ſpeaks (of whom that Pſalm is meant) who knew well what was the object of his Fathers pleaſure. The ſweet ſavour God ſmelt in *Noah*'s ſacrifice, was the occaſion of God's declaration for the Worlds ſtanding, *Gen.* 8. 21. *and the Lord ſaid in his heart, I will not curſe the ground any more for mans ſake.* That he would no more ſmite it with a totally deſtroying judgment. It was his reſpect to Chriſt repreſented in that ſacrifice, and to the faith and grace of *Noah* the ſacrificer. What Savour could an infinitely pure ſpirit ſmell in the blood and flames of beaſts?

2. *The courſe of natural things is for the good of the Church or particular members of it.* God makes articles of agreement with the Beaſts and Fouls, whoſe nature is raging and ravenous, and binds them in ſure bonds for the

the performance of those articles, *Hoseæ* 2. 18. *And in that day will I make a Covenant for them with the Beasts of the field, and with the fouls of Heaven, and with the creeping things of the ground, and will make them to lye down safely.* As upon our sin God can arm them against us; so upon our obedience he can make them serviceable even against their natures; as if he had made a Covenant with them, and they had both the reason and virtue to observe it. I do not remember any instance in Scripture, that God went out of the usual tract of his providence, and acted in an extraordinary manner, but where his people where one way or other concerned. It was for *Joshua*'s and the *Israelites* sake that the Sun was arrested to stand still in the Valley of *Ajalon*, that they might have light enough to defeat their Enemies, and pursue their victory.* The Sea shall against its natural course stand in heaps like walls of brass to assist the *Israelites* escape.* The fire is restrained in the operation of its nature, even whilst it retains its burning quality; when the lives of the three valiant believing Children are in danger. * The mouths

* *Josh.* 10. 12, 13.

* *Exod.* 14. 22.

of

of Lyons are muzled, when the ſafety of his beloved *Daniel* is concerned. * And the ſhadow goes back upon the Dyal for *Hezekiah*'s ſake. * When God would at any time deliver his people, He can muſter up Lightnings and Thunders for their aſſiſtance; * He can draw all the Regiments of Heaven into Battel array, and arm the Stars to fight againſt *Siſera*, when *Iſraels* condition needs it; and make even the loweſt Creatures to liſt themſelves as *Auxiliaries* in the ſervice. God hath not a diſpleaſure with ſenſleſs Creatures, neither is tranſported with ſtrains of fury againſt ſuch objects, when he alters their natural courſe. *Hab.* 3. 8. *Was the Lord diſpleaſed againſt the Rivers, was thy wrath againſt the Sea, that thou didſt ride upon thy Horſes, and Chariots of Salvation?* No, but he made thoſe Creatures the Horſes and Chariots to ſpeed aſſiſtance and ſalvation to his people, which the Pſalmiſt elegantly deſcribes, *Pſal.* 114. All Creatures are his Hoſt, and that God that Created them, hath ſtill the Soveraign command over them, and can imbodie them in an Army to ſerve his purpoſe for the deliverance of his people,

* *Dan.* 6. 22.

* 2 *King.* 20. 11.

* 1 *Sam.* 7. 10.

as

as he did againſt *Pharaoh*.

3. *The intereſt of Nations is ordered as it moſt for the Churches good.* He orders both the courſe of natural things, and of civil affairs, for their intereſt. He alters the ſtate of things, and changeth Governors and Governments for the ſake of his people. For theſe cauſes God ſent *Eliſha* to Crown *Jehu*, King, 2 *King.* 9. 6, 7. *I have anointed thee King over the people the Lord*, &c. *that I may avenge the blood of of my Servants the Prophets, and the blood of all the Servants of the Lord at the hand of Jezabel.* For the ſakes of the Godly in that Nation, and the revenging the blood of the Prophets which had been ſhed, was he raiſed up by the Lord. He ſent ſuch judgments upon *Egypt*, that it was as much the intereſt of that Nation to let *Iſrael* go, as it was before to keep them their vaſſals. God orders the intereſt and affairs of Nations for thoſe ends; and according to this diſpoſition of affairs, Chriſt times his interceſſions for his Church. The Angels had been ſent out to view the ſtate of the World, and found it in peace, *Zach.* 1. 11. *behold, all the Earth ſits*

sits still, and is at rest, there had been Wars in *Artaxarexes* and *Xerxes* his time, but in the time of *Darius*, that part of the World had an universal peace, which was the fittest time for the restoration of the *Jews*, and building the Temple; because it could not be built, but by the Kings cost, whose treasure in the time of War was expended another way, nor would it consist with their policy to restore the *Jews* to their government at such a time when they had Wars with the Neighbour-parts of *Egypt*. See how God orders the state of the World in subserviency to his gracious intentions towards his Church. The time of the *Jewish* captivity was now out according to the promise of God, and God gives that part of the World a general peace, that the restauration of the *Jews*, and the rebuilding of the Temple might be facilitated, and the truth of his promise in their deliverance accomplished. Upon the news of this general peace in that part of the World, Christ expostulates with God for the restauration of *Jerusalem*, *vers.* 12. *How long, O Lord, wilt thou not have mercy on Jerusalem, and on the Cities of Judah,*

against

againſt which thou haſt had indignation theſe threeſcore and ten years? The time of the Captivity determined by God, was now expired. The firſt reformation in *Germany* was back'd by reaſons of ſtate as it was then altered; it being the intereſt of many Princes of that Countrey to countenance *Luther*'s Doctrine, for the putting a ſtop to the growing greatneſs of *Charles* the fifth, who had evident deſigns to enſlave them. I might mention many more, only by the way let me adviſe thoſe that have an inclination to read hiſtories of former tranſactions, to which men naturally are addicted, to make this your end, to obſerve the ſtrange providences of God in the World, and how admirably he hath made them ſubſervient to the intereſt of the Church; which will be the moſt profitable way of reading them, whereby they will not only ſatisfie your curioſity, but eſtabliſh your Chriſtianity. *Calvin* underſtands that place, *Deut.* 32. 8. *He ſets the bounds of the people according to the number of the Children of Iſrael*, that in the whole ordering of the ſtate of the World, God propoſeth this as his end to conſult for

the

the good of his people, and his care extends to the reſt only in order to them; and though they are but a ſmall number, yet he orders his whole government of the Worlds affairs as may beſt tend to their Salvation. Therefore God ſets the people bounds, or enlargeth them according as they may be ſerviceable one way or other to this end. And the reaſon is rendered, *v.* 9. *For the Lords portion is his people, and Jacob is the Lot of his inheritance.* Therefore God orders all the reſt of the World in ſubſerviency to the maintaining and improving his portion and inheritance.

Secondly. 2. *As the World, ſo the gifts and common graces of men in the World are for the good of the Church,* which is a great argument for providence in general; ſince there is nothing ſo conſiderable in government as the diſpoſing of places to men according to their particular endowments and abilities for them. And the beſtowing ſuch gifts upon men, is none of the meaneſt arguments for Gods providential government of the World. As,

1. *The gifts of good men.* The gifts conferred upon *Paul* were depoſited in him,

not

not only to be poſſeſſed by him, but uſed and laid out for the good of the Church, *Col.* 1. 25. *Whereof I am made a Miniſter according to the diſpenſation of God which is given to me for you:* The manifeſtation of the Spirit to any man is given to profit withal, 1 *Cor.* 12. 7. And this is the great end for which men ſhould ſeek to excel, *viz.* for the edifying of the Church; 1 *Cor.* 14. 12. *For as much as you are zealous of Spiritual gifts, ſeek that you may excel to the edifying of the Church.*

2. *The gifts and common graces of bad men.* There is ſomething that is amiable in men, though they have not grace. As in Stones, Plants and Flowers, though they have not ſenſe, there is ſomething grateful in them, as colour and ſmell. &c. And all thoſe things that are lovely in men are for the Churches good, the beſt, life, and the worſt, death, things preſent, let who will be the poſſeſſor, all things between Life and Death are for the good of Believers, becauſe they are Chriſts, 1 *Cor.* 3. 22. *Whether Paul or Apollo or Cephas, or the world, i. e.* [Whether the gifts of the prime lights in the Church, or the common gifts of the world] *Are all yours, and*

ye are Christs, and Christ is Gods. God is the dispenser of them, Christ is the Governour of them, and all for your sakes. As the medicinable qualities of waters are not for the good of themselves, but the accommodation of the indigencies of men. By the common works of the Spirit God doth keep men from the evil of the World. For it cannot be supposed, that the Spirit whose mission is principally for the Church, should give such gifts out of love to men which hate him, and are not the objects of his eternal purpose; but he hath some other ends in doing it, which is the advantage of his Church and People: And this God causes by the preaching of the Gospel, which when it works gracious works in some, produceth common works in others for the good of those graciousones. As a seed of corn hath straw husks and Chaff come up with it, which are shelters to that little seed which lies in the midst; so in the preaching of the Gospel there are some husks come up among natural men, which God makes to be shelters to the Church as those common works, and restraining men through the knowledge of Christ. God gives

gifts

gifts to them, not out of love to them, but love to his Church. As Nurſes of great mens Children are fed with better meat then the other Servants, not out of any particular perſonal reſpect to them, but to their office, that the milk whereby the Child is nouriſhed, may be the ſweeter and wholeſomer; were it not for that Relation, ſhe muſt be content with the Diet allowed to the reſt of the Servants. Some ſtinking plants may have medicinal virtues which the Phyſician extracts for the cure of a diſeaſe, and flings the reſt upon the Dunghil. God beſtows ſuch qualities upon men otherwiſe unſavoury to him which he draws forth upon ſeveral occaſions for the good of thoſe that are more peculiarly under his care, and then caſts them away. Theſe gifts are indeed the ruine of bad men becauſe of their pride, but the Churches advantage in regard of their excellency, and are often as profitable to others, as dangerous to themſelves. As all that good which is in plants and animals is for the good of man; ſo all the gifts of natural men are for the Churches good, for they are for that end as the principal next the glory

of God; becauſe every inferior thing is ordained to ſomething ſuperior as its end. Plants are ordained for the nouriſhment of Beaſts, and both Plants and Beaſts for Men. The inferior men for the ſervice of higher, and all for the community; yet ſtill there is a higher end beyond thoſe, *viz.* the glory of God, to which they are ultimately ordained, which is ſo connected with the Churches good, that what ſerves one, ſerves the other.

3. *Angels*, the top Creatures in the Creation are ordered for the good of the Church. If the Stars are not Cyphers in the World only to be gaz'd upon, but have their influences both upon Plants and Animals; As the Sun in impregnating the Earth, and enlivening the Plants, and aſſiſting the growth of fruits for the good of mankind: If the ſtars have thoſe natural influences upon the ſenſible world, the Angels which are the morning ſtars, have no leſs intereſt as inſtruments in the government of it. The Heathens had ſuch a notion of *Dæmons* working thoſe things which were done in the world, but according to the will and

and order of the ſupream God. The Angels are called watchers, *Dan.* 4. 13. *a Watcher and an holy one, verſ.* 17. *this is by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones*: they watch for Gods orders, and watch for Gods honour, and the Churches good. There are orders of ſtate among them, for we read of their decree; 'tis called their decree *miniſterially* as they execute it, *approbative* as they ſubſcribe to the equity and goodneſs of it. As the Saints are ſaid to judge the world not *authoritative* as in commiſſion with Chriſt, but as they approve of Chriſts ſentence. They ſeem to requeſt thoſe things of God which may make for his glory, and they decree among themſelves what is fit to be preſented to God in order to his glory. They cannot endure that men ſhould trample upon Gods authority, deſpoil him of his right, and tread down his inheritance; and therefore they ſend ſuch requeſts to God to act ſo as men may acknowledg him and his government, *to the intent that the living may know that the moſt high rules in the kingdoms of men.* Their care therefore muſt be for the

By way of approbation.

By way of Authority

Church, since God rules all things in order to that, and since that is Gods portion and inheritance, so that as they have a care of Gods glory, they must also have a care of Gods portion and his peculiar treasure. The inward part of the Temple was to be adorned with Cherubims to note the special attendance of the holy Angels in the assemblies of the Saints: As evil Angels plot against the Church, so good Angels project for it. Though in the Scripture we find Angels sometimes employed in affairs of common providence, and doing good to them that are not of the Church; as one is sent to comfort *Hagar* and relieve *Ishmael* upon his cry though he had scoffed at *Isaac* the heir of the covenant, when he was in *Abraham*'s Family; * yet for the most part they were employed in the concerns of some of his special Servants. Angels thrust *Lot* out of *Sodom*. * An Angel stopt the Lyons mouths when *Daniel* was in the Den, *Dan.* 6. 18. *My God hath sent his Angel, and hath shut the Lyons mouths.* God emploies Angels in the preserving and ruining of Empires, which is clear in the prophecy of *Daniel*, and some understand

Exod. 25. 1.

Trap. *on Numb.* p. 58.

* *Gen.* 21. 17.

* *Gen.* 19. 15, 16.

derſtand, *Iſa.* 10.34. *And Lebanon ſhall fall by a mighty one*, of an Angel. As the Soul ſends forth a multitude of Spirits ſwiftly into the nerves for the ſupply of the loweſt member, which runs thither upon the leaſt motion: So do the Angels which are Gods Miniſters, run at the appointment of God, and are employed in all the wheels of providence. The Spirit of the living Creatures was in the wheels of providence. * * *Ezek.* 1. 20.

1. *The higheſt orders among them are not exempted from being officers for the Church.* Though they are called Gods Angels in reſpect of their immediate attendance on God; yet they are called mans Angels in reſpect of the ſervice they do for them, *Matth.* 18. 10. *Their Angels do alwaies behold the face of my Father which is in Heaven.* They are not the ordinary ſort of Angels only which attend upon thoſe little ones, upon young converts, humble Souls, thoſe little ones in the Kingdom of Heaven; but they are the higheſt Courtiers there, ſuch as ſee the face of God and ſtand before him. A King hath many Servants, but not every Servant, only the chief of the Nobility

ſtand before him; ſo they are not Angels of the meaneſt order and rank in Heaven, that are ordered to attend the loweſt Chriſtian. The Apoſtle makes no doubt of this, *Heb.* 1. 14. *are they not all miniſtring ſpirits* [there is no queſtion but they are] *ſent forth to miniſter for them who ſhall be heirs of Salvation?* He aſſerts confidently that not one of them is blotted out of the *Liſt* for this employment. *Are they not all?* none are exempted from the ſervice of God, ſo none are exempted from the end of that ſervice, which is the good of Believers. They are Gods ſervants, but for the Churches good, for them which ſhall be hairs, [*are they not all?*] it is irrational to deny it. And they are ſent forth, every one of them hath his commiſſion ſign'd by God for this purpoſe, and not only for the Church in general, but for every member in particular [*for the heirs of Salvation.*] And not only for them which are already called and enrolled, but for them who ſhall be called, whoſe names are written in the Book of Gods election [*who ſhall be heirs.*] And they are not only faintly ſent as if they might go if they will, but they have a

ſtrict

ſtrict charge to look after them well, not in one or two of their works or ways, but in all, *Pſal.* 91. 11. *He ſhall give his Angels charge over thee to keep thee in all thy wayes, to bear thee up in their hands, leſt thou daſh thy foot againſt a ſtone*; they are to uſe all their ſtrength to this purpoſe, *to bear them up in their hands.* As the elder Children are appointed by Parents to have a care of the younger in their works and motions, and to uſe both their wiſdom and ſtrength for them. The Angels are a guard to ſecure them here, and at laſt to convey them to their fathers houſe, *Luk.* 16. 22. when a man is in favour with a Prince, all the Courtiers will be obſervant of him.

2. *Armies of them are employed upon this occaſion.* There are great multitudes of them, as *Bildad* ſpeaks, *Job.* 25. 3. *Is there any number of his armies?* that is, of his Angels: when *Joel* ſpeaks of the heathens gathering together; *thither* ſaith he, *Lord, cauſe thy mighty ones to come down.* * A whole ſquadron of them ſhall attend upon a gracious man according to the circumſtances he is involved in. *Gen.* 32. 1, 2. *And Jacob went on his way, and the Angels*

* *Joel.* 3. 11.

Angels of God met him, and when Jacob ſaw them, he ſaid this is Gods hoſt. Regiments of Angels enough to make up an Army (for ſo *Jacob* terms them) met him upon the way to ſecure his Brother *Eſau* and to encourage him in his journey. So ſome interpret, 2 *Sam.* 5. 24. *the ſound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees.* The ſign of the marching of a Brigade of Angels, with the Lord in the head of them for the diſcomfiture of *David*'s Enemies, *then ſhall the Lord go out before thee to ſmite the hoſt of the Philiſtines*: And this they do not of their own heads, but by the pleaſure of God, not only by a bare will, but a delight, *Pſal.* 103. 21. *Bleſs the Lord all ye his hoſts, ye Miniſters of his that do his pleaſure.* [his] his choiceſt pleaſure, he delights to ſee this his militia upon action.

3. *Chriſt hath the government of them to this end for his Church.* Angels are all put in ſubjection to him, *Heb.* 2. 7, 8. *In that he put all in ſubjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him.* He is exalted above all principality and power, God hath put all things under his

his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the Church, *Eph.* 1. 21, 22. all things, even principalities and powers are put under his feet, to be commissioned and influenced by him for the good of his Church; * they are ordered by the Spirit of Christ to this purpose, *Zach.* 1. 10. *Those are they whom the Lord hath sent to walk to and fro through the Earth.* They are his faithful messengers dispatcht into the World by him, as scouts and spies to take notice of the state of the World, and to give him intelligence, and an exact account of affairs, and *v.* 11. they give an account to Christ. Christ is the Head and General of them, *Col.* 2. 10. They are his Host, alwaies in a warlike posture, with Christ in the Head of them, *Zach.* 1. 8. upon their *Horses*, which notes readiness to move and speed in motion: And as an Host they are said to pitch their tents round about them that fear him; and are in a continual conflict with the evil Angels to prevent their designs in the behalf of Christ, whom they acknowledge as their head by their worship of him. * Christ orders them to take care to seal his Servants

* *Ezek.* 1. 12. *whither the Spirit was to go they went.*

* *Heb.* 1. 6.

vants in the foreheads that they may be preſerved in the ſtorms which ſhall happen in the World at the time of the ruine of the *Romiſh* Papacy, *Revel.*7. 2,3. An Angel comes that had the ſeal of the living God (commiſſion of God) ſaying, *hurt not the Earth, nor the Sea, nor the trees, till we have ſealed the Servants of our God in the foreheads.*

4. *The great actions which have been done in the World, or ſhall be done for the Church, are performed by them.* Angels were ſent as expreſſes by God with his great decrees concerning the revolntions of times. * An Angel was ſent to *Daniel* with the meſſage of a Redeemer, and the cleareſt prophecy of Chriſt, which the *Jews* are not able to anſwer to this day, which they moſt ſtartle at: Part of the diſcovery of the Revelation to *John*, which is as a ſtanding Almanack to the Church, was made us by an Angel. * And when by the courſe of time thoſe turnings are to happen in the World, the Angels muſt have their ſhare of ſervice in them. The Trumpets are ſounded by Angels, and the Vials which are filled with the cauſes of ſuch alterations, are poured

* *Dan.* 7. 16. *Dan.* 8. 16. *And I heard a mans voice which called and ſaid, Gabriel, make this man to underſtand the viſion.* * *Dan.* 9. 21. *Revel.* 10. 8, 9. *Revel.* 22. 8, 9.

poured out by the hands of Angels. Some indeed by the Angels there mentioned, underſtand the viſible inſtruments of reformation, not excluding the Angels who are the inviſible Miniſters in the affairs of the World. *

5. *They engage in this work for the Church with delight*, They act as Gods Miniſters in his providence with a unanimous conſent.* So that they perform their office with the ſame ſwiftneſs, and with the ſame affection, without emulation, to go one before another, which makes many actions ſucceed ill among men; but they go hand in hand. They do it with affection; both in reſpect of the kind diſpoſition of their natures, and as they are fellow-members of the ſame body, for they are parts of the Church, and of the Heavenly *Ieruſalem*, *Heb.* 12. 22. *Ye are come to the Heavenly Jeruſalem, and to an innumerable company of Angels, to the general Aſſembly and Church of the firſt born*, and therefore act out of affection to that which is a part of their body, as well as out of obedience to their head. They do it in reſpect of their own improvement too, and increaſe of their knowledge (which is the deſire of all intellectual

* Lightfoot. *Temple. Chap.* 38. p. 253, 256.

* *Ezek.* 1. 9. *Their wings were joyned one to another.*

tellectual Creatures.) For they compleat their underſtandings by the ſight of the methods of infinite wiſdom in the perfecting his gracious deſigns. And it is Gods intent that they ſhould grow in the knowledge of his great myſtery by their employment, *Eph.* 3. 10. *To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the Church the manifold wiſdom of God, i. e.* By the gracious works of God towards the Church, and in the behalf of it, for the ſecurity and growth of the Church, and in the executions of thoſe decrees which as inſtruments they are imployed in. For I do not underſtand, how it can be meant of the knowledge of Chriſt, for that they know more then the Church below can acquaint them with; for without queſtion they have a clear inſight into the offices of Chriſt who is their Head, and whom they are ordered to worſhip. They underſtand the aim of his death, and reſurrection, and can better explain the dark predictions of Scripture, then purblind man can. But by obſerving the Methods which God uſes in the accompliſhment of them, they become more intelligent

intelligent, and commence Maſters of knowledg in a higher degree, which it is probable is one reaſon of their joy, when they ſee Gods infinite Wiſdom and Grace in the converſion of a ſinner; without affection to them, & their employment about them, they could not rejoice ſo much: And their rejoicing in their firſt bringing in to God, argues their joy in all their employments, which concerns their welfare.

2. *As all good things, ſo all bad things are ordered by providence for the good of the Church.* That which in its own nature is an injury, by Gods ordering puts on the nature of a mercy; and what is poyſon in it ſelf, by the Almighty art becomes a Soveraign medicine. Are Gods diſpenſations in their own nature deſtructive? That wiſe Phyſician knows how to make poyſons work the effect of purges: Are they ſharp? It is to humble and purge the Church. As ſhadows ſerve to ſet out the pictures, ſo the darkeſt paſſages of providence are made by God to commend the beauty of thoſe glorious things he works for his Church: We may ſee this in 1. *Bad perſons:* As, *Secondly.*

1. *The Devil.* God manageth him for his

his own glory, and the ſtrengthning of Believers. * The Devils deſired to enter into the herd of ſwine, with an intent, probably, not only to deſtroy the ſwine, but to incenſe the *Gadarens* againſt him, out of whom they had been caſt, to do him ſome conſiderable miſchief. But what is the iſſue? As they diſcover their malice, ſo they inhance the value of Chriſts kindneſs to the diſtreſſed man, whom he had freed from this tyranny: Hereby alſo was the Law of God juſtified, in commanding the *Jews* to abſtain from Swines Fleſh, which the *Gadarens* being Apoſtate *Jews* had broken; he magnified his own power in the routing ſuch a number of unclean Spirits, which had not been ſo conſpicuous in the turning them out of one man, had not this regiment diſcovered themſelves among the Swine, and brought ſuch a loſs upon the *Gadarens*; whereby as they ſhewed their own ſtrength and malice, ſo they diſcovered occaſionally the greatneſs of Chriſts charity and his power over them; ſo that in granting the malicious petition of this exaſperated Legion, the Law of God is juſtified, our Saviours love glorified, his

* *Math.* 8. 31, 32.

power

power manifeſted. And a foundation laid for the gaining Proſelytes in that Country, (to which purpoſe he left the man he had cured,) * and to ſtrengthen the faith of thoſe poor Believers, which then followed him. God makes uſe of the Devils by the Soveraignty of providence, to bring about ends unknown to themſelves for all their wiſdom. The malice of the Devil againſt *Job* hath rendred him a ſtanding miracle of patience for ever. They are *the rulers of the darkneſs of this World*, * not of the light of the World; they are the rulers of the wicked, and the ſcullions of the Saints to ſcour and cleanſe them. They are the rulers of the World, but ſubordinate to ſerve the providence of God; wherein God declares his wiſdom by ſerving himſelf of the worſt of his Enemies. The Devil thought he had brought a total deſtruction upon mankind, when he perſwaded our firſt Parents to eat of the forbidden fruit, but the only wiſe God ordered it to bring about a greater glory to himſelf, and a more firm ſtability to his people, in introducing an everlaſting covenant which could not be broken,

* *Luk.* 8. 39.

* *Eph.* 6. 12.

and eſtabliſhing their happineſs upon ſurer terms then it was ſettled in Paradiſe. And afterwards in filling the heart of *Judas* to betray Chriſt, and the hearts of the *Jews* to crucifie him. Even by that way whereby he thought to hinder the good of mankind, he occaſionally promotes their perpetual redemption. And I do not much queſtion but thoſe very principles which the Devil had diſtilled into the gentile World of ſhedding humane blood in ſacrifices for expiation of guilt; and the Gods converſing with men in humane ſhapes, and the imagination of the interceſſion of *Dæmons* for them; the firſt out of rage againſt mankind, and both that and the other to induce them to Idolatry, might facilitate the entertainment of Chriſt as the great expiatory ſacrifice, and the receiving of him as the Son of God, though in an humane ſhape, and the belief of his interceſſion. God over-reaches the Devil, and makes him inſtrumental for good, where he deſigns hurt and miſchief.

2. *Wicked men.* All the wicked in the midſt of the Church are for the good of it, either for the exerciſe of their grace, or

or ſecurity of their perſons, or intereſt, *Pro.* 16. 7. *When a mans ways pleaſe the Lord, He will make his enemies to be at peace with him.* Sometimes he will incline their hearts intentionally to favour, or order even their actions againſt them to procure their peace, contrary to their intentions. Sometimes God makes them his Sword to cut his people, ſometimes Phyſick to purge them, ſometimes Fire to melt and refine them, ſometime Hedges to preſerve them, ſometimes ā ranſom to redeem them. * A Traveller makes uſe of the mettle of a head-ſtrong Horſe to carry him to his journeys end. That wind which would overturn a little Boat, the skilful Pilot makes uſe of to drive his Ship into the Harbour, and the Husbandman to cleanſe his Corn from the Chaff. Though the ends of the workers, *viz.* God and wicked men are different, yet the end of the work is but one, which is ordered by Gods Soveraign pleaſure. It was promiſed in the promiſe of the Goſpel to the Gentiles, *Gen.* 9. 27. *God ſhall enlarge Japhet, and he ſhall dwell in the tents of Shem, and Canaan ſhall be his ſervant.* God ſhall allure *Japhet*, the Gen-

* *Pro.* 21. 18.

tiles of *Europe* to dwell in the tents of *Shem*, and *Canaan* the head of the curſed poſterity, ſhall be Servants to the Church beſide their will, and ſometimes againſt it by an over-ruling hand. And Chriſt hath bought them to be his Servants, 2 *Pet.* 2. 1. *denying the Lord that bought them*, and therefore hath the diſpoſing of them, whether they voluntarily give up themſelves to him or no. He is a Lord by purchaſe over them, who own him not as a Saviour. The hatred of the Churches enemies ſometimes conduceth more to her good, then the affections of all her worldly Friends. Now this appears,

Helvicus contra Judæos.

1. *In furthering the Goſpel.* The *Jews*, who ſpeak not of Chriſt among themſelves, but with opprobrious terms, have been the exact preſervers of the Old Teſtament, even to the very number of the letters; wherein Chriſtians have ſufficient to confirm them in the belief of Chriſts being the *Meſſiah*, and unanſwerable arguments againſt their adverſaries; Whereupon St. *Auſtin* terms them *capſarios Eccleſiæ*, ſuch that carry the Books of the Children of great men after them

to

to School. When the Authority of the *Revelation* was antiently queſtioned, the Church of *Rome* was inſtrumental to keep it in the number of the Canonical books, not thinking they ſhould find their own Church ſo plainly Deciphered in it, to be the mother of abominations. To this we may refer the action of *Ptolemy Philadelphus* King of *Egypt*, in cauſing the Scripture to be tranſlated about three hundred years before the coming of Chriſt; through which the Nations * might better diſcern, (as it were through a proſpective glaſs) the new ſtar of *Jacob* which was ſhortly to ariſe: No doubt but many of the *Gentiles* by comparing the old Scripture Prophecies, which they now could read in the *Greek* language, might be more eaſily induced to an embracing the Goſpel, and acknowledging Chriſt to be the *Meſſiah*, when it came to be divulged among them. *Herod* is the cauſe of the conſultation about the place of Chriſts birth; not for any good-will he had to him, whom he intended to murther, but God makes uſe of this to clear up the truth of the prophecy concerning *Bethlehem*, the place

* Jackſon *vol.* 1. *Fol.* p. 62.

of his birth, *Mat.* 2. 5, 6. *Out of thee ſhall come a Governour that ſhall rule my people Iſrael.* And they certainly were not very good, who preached Chriſt out of envie, and propagated the Goſpel, wherein *Paul* rejoyced not in their ſin, but in the providential fruit of it, *Phil.* 1. 15, 18. *Some indeed preach Chriſt even of envy and ſtrife, what then! Notwithſtanding every way, whether in pretence or truth Chriſt is preached, and* I *therein do rejoyce, yea, and will rejoyce.*

2. *In furthering the temporal good of the Church;*

1. *In its preſervation.* Wicked men are often ſerviceable to the Church, as the filthy Raven was to holy *Elijah*, or as the Lyon which would have devoured *Sampſon*, is a ſtore-houſe to provide him food; for in his hunger he finds a table ſpread in the belly of his Eenemy. *Pharaoh's* deſign was to deſtroy Iſrael, and the Daughter of that irreconcilable Enemy, is directed by God to preſerve *Moſes*, who was to be the ruine of her family, the deſtruction of the *Egyptian* glory, and the Deliverer of the Church. She ſaves him out of charity, and God out of a wiſe

wiſe deſign; She by his Education in the *Egyptian* learning, fits him for the Court, and God for the deliverance of his Church. *Egypt* had corn to relieve firſt *Abraham*, * afterward *Jacob* in a time of famine; the family wherein the Church of God was only then bound up. *Herod* lies in wait for Chriſts deſtruction, and *Egypt*, the moſt Idolatrous Country in the world, and an ancient Enemy to Gods Church, affords him ſhelter. God makes *Moab to hide his out-caſts, and be their covert from the face of the ſpoiler.* ** Some think, Gods deſign in ſending *Jonah* to *Nineveh*, to work ſo remarkable a change by repentance, was to ſoften ſome of their hearts, and the hearts of their poſterity to deal more tenderly with thoſe gracious *Iſraelites*, who in the captivity of the ten Tribes, ſome years after ſhould be their gueſts. God making thereby proviſion for his own people in that common judgment which ſhould come upon the Nation. This God doth ſometimes by reviving the law of nature, and the common ſentiments of Religion in the hearts of natural men; whereby their own conſciences bearing witneſs

* *Gen.* 12. 10.

** *Iſa.* 16. 3, 4.

to the innocency and excellency of the Church of God, put them upon thoughts for its ſecurity. Sometimes it is above their own Sphere, and beſides their own intentions. The Whale which ſwallowed *Jonah*, intended him as a morſel to quell his hunger, but proves his ſecurity, and diſgorgeth him upon the ſhoar: They underſtand their own aim, but not the deſign of God. The Leech that ſucks the Patients blood, knows not the Chirurgions deſign, who uſeth it for the cure of a diſeaſe. Sometimes their rage proves their own ruine, and the Churches ſafety; as the Leech burſts it ſelf ſometimes, and ſaves the Patient. The very Earth, whereby is meantt he carnal world, is ſaid to help the Woman the Church, by ſwallowing up the flood which the Dragon caſts out of his mouth againſt her.* Juſt as the old rags were the inſtruments whereby *Jeremiah* was drawn out of the Dungeon.

* *Revel.* 12. 16.

2. *In the advancement of the Church, or perſons eminent.* *Abner* had a Plot for bringing *Iſrael* to *David*'s Scepter, which concurred both with Gods purpoſe and promiſes, but ſprung from an

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ill cauſe, a diſdain to be checked by *Iſhboſheth*, though his King, for an unjuſtifiable act, for having too much familiarity with one of *Sauls* Concubines. * And from this animoſity he contrives the deposing of *Iſhboſheth* and the exaltation of *David*, yet diſſembles the ground, and pretends the promiſe of God to *David*, *v.* 18. *For the Lord hath ſpoken of David, by the hand of my ſervant David I will ſave my people Iſrael out of the hand of the Philiſtines.* He is the firſt Engine that moves in this buſineſs, and by him and his correſpondents after his death, *v.* 17. the buſineſs is brought about by Gods overruling hand, wherein Gods promiſe is accompliſhed, and *David* a type of Chriſt, and the great Champion for the Church againſt its enemies round about, is advanced. * Very remarkable is the advancement of *Mordecai*, in order to the advancing the *Jews* as well as preſerving them, when the necks of all the viſible Church God had in the World, were upon the block. *Haman* ignorantly is the cauſe of this preferment of *Mordecai*, and at that time too, when he came to petition for his death, *Eſther* 6.4.

* *Sam.* 3.6, 7, 8, 9, 10.

He

He was come to ſpeak to the King to hang Mordecai upon the Gallowes, which he had prepared for him: The King asks him, what ſhould be done to the man whom the King delights to honour, *v.* 16. He imagineth that the Kings queſtion did reſpect himſelf, lays out a Scheme of what honour he was ambitious of, *v.* 8, 9. which was by the King deſigned for *Mordecai*, and *Haman* made the Herald to proclaim him: Here *Haman*, not only a wicked man in himſelf, but the greateſt Enemy *Mordecai* and the whole Church of God had, is made unwittingly an inſtrument to exalt *Mordecai*, and in him the whole Church of God.

3. *In enriching the Church, or ſome perſons in it, whereby it may become more ſerviceable to God.* How wonderful was it, that when the *Iſraelites* were abominated by the *Egyptians*, God ſhould ſo order their hearts, that the *Egyptians* ſhould lend them Gold and Jewels, * and diſmiſs them with wealth as well as ſafety; and not ſo much as one perſon moleſt them, till they arrived at the Red Sea? The very gain and honour of the Enemies is ſometimes conſecrated to the Lord

* *Exod.* 12. 35, 36.

of

of the whole Earth, *Micah* 4. 13. *Arise and thresh, oh Daughter of Sion, I will make thy horn Iron, and thou shall beat in pieces many people, and I will consecrate their gain unto the Lord, and their substance to the Lord of the whole Earth*: This was when many Nations were gathered against *Sion*, *v.* 11. the wealth of the Sinner is laid up for the just, *Pro.* 13. 22. And God sometimes makes the wicked unwittingly to themselves, in their carking, be the factors for good men, into whose lap providence poures the fruit of their labour. God gave *Cyrus* the spoils of *Babylon*, and the treasures of *Crœsus*, to enable him to furnish the *Jews* with materials for building the Temple, *Isa.* 45. 3, 4. *and I will give thee the treasure of darkness and hidden riches of secret places*, (speaking of *Cyrus*) *that thou mayest know, that I the Lord which call thee by thy Name, am the God of Israel, for Jacob my Servants sake, &c.* That he might acknowledge him the God of *Israel*, and lay his wealth out in the service of God, and the service of *Jacob* his servant. *Isa.* 45. 3, 4.

2. As bad persons, *so bad things are ordered to the good of the Church*, whether they

they be *ſinful* evils, or *afflictive*.

1. *Sin.*

1. *A mans own ſin. Oneſimus* runs from his Maſter, and finds a ſpiritual Father; his being a runnagate, is the occaſion of his being a convert. By flying from his Maſter, he becomes a Brother in the Lord. * What *Joſeph's* brethren ſinfully intended for revenge againſt their brother, and ſecurity from their Fathers checks, (who acquainted *Jacob* with their miſcarriages,) God orderedfo r the preſervation of them who were the only viſible Church in the World. Their ſin againſt their Brother contrary both to their intentions and expectations, became the means of their ſafety. God makes the remainders of ſin in a good man, an occaſion to exerciſe his grace, diſcover his ſtrength and ſhew his loyalty to God.

* *Phil.* 10, 12, 16.

2. *Other mens ſins.* That might be in *Sarah* but a heady paſſion, for hearing her Son mocked by *Iſhmael*, that made her ſo deſirous to have the bondwoman and her firſt ſon thruſt out, * but God makes uſe of it to make a ſeparation between *Iſaac* the heir of the Covenant, and *Iſhmal*, that he might not be corrupted

* *Gen.* 21. 10.

rupted by any evil example from him: God orders *Abraham* to harken to her voice, becauſe in *Iſaac* his ſeed ſhould be called: * And the revengeful threatning of *Eſau* was the occaſion of *Jacob's* flight, whereby he was hindred from marrying with any of the people of the Land by whom he might have been induced to Idolatry. * Why ſhould we miſtruſt that God that can make uſe of the Luſts of men to bring about his own gracious purpoſes?

* ver. 13

* *Gen.* 27. 3, 46.

2. *Commotions in the World.* There is the eye of God, that eye which runs to and fro throughout the whole Earth in the Wheels of worldly motions, even in the moſt dreadful providences in the World, that ſtare upon men with a grim countenance. * All the overturnings in the World are ſubſervient to the Churches intereſt, though they are not viſibly ſo, unleſs diligently attended. * God orders the confuſions of the world, and is in the midſt of the tumults of the people, *Pſal.* 29. 10, 11. *The Lord ſits upon the floud, yea, the Lord ſits King for ever, the Lord will give ſtrength to his people, the Lord will bleſs his people with peace.* He ſits

* *Ezek.* 1. 18. *their wings were dreadful and their wings were full of eyes.*

* *Broughton on Rev.* 13. § 177.

ſits upon the floud as a Charioteer in his Chariot, guiding it with holy and merciful intentions to his people, to give them both ſtrength and peace in the midſt of them, and as the iſſue of them. By Water and Flouds is frequently meant tumults and confuſions in the World. If it were not ſo, why ſhould our Saviour encourage his Diſciples and all their Succeſſors in the ſame profeſſion, to lift up their heads when they hear of wars, if their redemption * were not deſigned by God in them; they are all teſtimonies of the nearer approaches of Chriſt in power and glory to judge the Earth, and glorifie his people. Gods great end in the ſhaking of Nations is the performing thoſe gracious promiſes to his Church which yet remain unaccompliſht: Theſe earthquakes in the world, will bring Heaven to the Church. The great revolutions in the Eaſtern part of the world, the ruine of the *Babylonian* Empire, the erecting the *Perſian*, and all the means whereby it was brought about, God ordered, God foretold, God directed for *Jacobs* ſervice. *Cyrus* led by ambition, levies an army againſt *Babylon*, yet though he

*Luk.21. 25,26,27 28.

was

was a ravenous Bird, he was to execute the Counſel of God, *Iſa.* 46. 11. *calling a ravenous bird from the eaſt, the man that executeth my Counſel*, to be an inſtrument for the delivery of the captiv'd *Jews*, and the reſtorer of the ruin'd Temple. He had called him out by name to make a great revolution of the World. He foretold by his Prophet *Iſaiah* many years before, the means he ſhould uſe in the ſiege of *Babylon* to attain the victory, the very dividing *Euphrates*, which was the great confidence of the *Babylonian*. *Iſa.* 44. 27. *that ſay to the deep be dry, and I will dry up the rivers*; whereby it was as it were dried up for them to paſs over the very opening of the gates, *Iſa.* 45. 1. *and the gates ſhall not be ſhut*; the *Babylonians* in a preſumptuous ſecurity had left them open, thinking it impoſſible the City could be taken, becauſe of the River *Euphrates*, *I will go before thee, and make the crooked places ſtrait*; and what was the end of that great revolution and motion in that part of the World? See *Iſa.* 45. 4. *For Jacob my Servants ſake, and Iſrael mine elect, I have even called thee by thy name*: This prophecy was, when *Jeruſalem*

rusalem and the Temple were ſtanding; God caſts about long before his people needs, for their welfare in the great revolutions and changes of the World. In *Iſa.* 44. 28. *that ſaith of Cyrus, he is my Shepherd, and ſhall perform all my pleaſure, even ſaying to Jeruſalem, thou ſhalt be built, and to the Temple, thy foundation ſhall be laid.* *Cyrus* had no knowledge of this end of God; *though thou haſt not known me, Iſa.* 45. 4, 5. twice repeated. *Cyrus* did not know God, neither did he know Gods end; he acts his own purpoſes, and is acted by God to higher purpoſes then he underſtood. In all the ſiftings of Nations, and ſifting the Church among the Nations, as Corn is ſifted in a Sieve. God deſigns not the deſtruction of his people, but the cleanſing them, the ſeparating the flower from the bran.

3. *Deſtroying judgments, yea, and the very curſes ſometimes are turned into bleſſings.*

Deſtroying judgments. The deſolation of the *Jews* was not only in order to the fulfilling Gods truth in his threatnings, but uſeful for the great Goſpel deſign; the fall of the *Jews* was the calling of the *Gentiles, Rom.* 11. 11, 12. *Through their fall*

fall Salvation is come unto the Gentiles: And alſo their fall and diſperſion among the *Gentiles*, was propheſied of as the occaſion of their return to God, *Ezek.* 20. 36, 37. *Like as I pleaded with your Fathers in the Wilderneſs, ſo will I plead with you, and cauſe you to paſs under the rod, and bring you into the bond of the Covenant*; when they are in the Wilderneſs of Captivity, then God ſhall plead with them, and make them to paſs under the rod of propriety, and bring them into Covenant. The like alſo is propheſied of that Captivity of the ten Tribes to this day not known where they are, *Hoſ.* 2. 14. The time of Gods ſpeaking kindly to her, ſhould be in the Wilderneſs, and then I *will give her the valley of Achor for a door of hope.* No queſtion but God hath performed his promiſe, and brought many of the poſterity of the ten Tribes into the Church among the Maſs of the *Gentiles*, among whom they were diſperſed.

* *Gen.* 49. 7. *Curſed be their anger, for it was fierce, and their wrath, for it was cruel, I will divide them in Jacob, and ſcatter them in Iſrael.*

Curſes ſometimes as God, orders them, prove bleſſings. The curſe of inſpir'd *Jacob* upon *Levi*, * was the advantage both of *Levi* and the *Iſraelites*; that they

were diſperſed among the ſeveral Tribes without any univerſal cohabitation as the reſt, was a curſe: But that they ſhould be the inſtructors of the people in the matters of the Law, was an honour God put upon the head of that Tribe, and a publick bleſſing to the people.

4. *Diviſions in the Church.* One would think this of all other things ſhould ſhake the foundation of it, yet God orders even theſe to the good of the Church. *Paul* and *Barnabas* two great Apoſtles fell out. * the contention comes to be very ſharp, a thing naturally of very ill conſequence, in two of the prime guides of Chriſtianity, and at the laying the firſt foundation of it; but the Goſpel gains ground: One ſails to *Cyprus*, and the other travels into *Syria*. Perhaps had not this quarrel been between them and they thus disjoynted from one another, ſome of thoſe poor Souls had never, or at leaſt not ſo ſoon have heard of the Goſpel-mercy.

* *Acts* 15. 36, 37, 38, 39, &c.

5. *Perſecutions.* Theſe naturally tend to the diſſolution and utter extirpation of it, but God orders them otherwiſe. God doth often lay the Scene of his amazing

zing providences in very dismal afflictions: As the Limner first puts on the dusky colours, on which he intends to draw the portraiture of some illustrious beauty. The Oppression of *Israel* immediately before their Deliverance, was the dusky colour whereupon God drew those gracious lines of their Salvation from *Egypt*, the pattern of all the after Deliverances of the Church in all Ages, and a Type of our Spiritual Redemption by Christ. The Humiliation, Persecution and Death of the Son of God, was the dusky colour upon which God drew that amazing piece of Divine Love and Wisdom in mans salvation, which the eyes of Saints and Angels will be fix'd on with ravishing admirations to all Eternity. All Afflictions in the World, which God doth exercise the Church with, are parts of his Providence, and like mournful Notes in Musick, which make the melody of the Tune more pleasant, and set off those sweeter Aires which follow upon them. Afflictions here, cause the joys of Heaven to appear more glorious in the eyes of glorified Saints. The Persecutions of the Martyrs did but heighten

their Graces, ſend them to the place of Reſt, and enlarge their Robes of Glory. God many times ſaves his People by ſufferings, and brings them to the ſhore upon the planks of a broken ſhip, and makes that which was the occaſion of their loſs, to be a means of their ſafety: they ſometimes evidence that which they would deſtroy. *Herods* Murdering the Children to deſtroy him that was born King of the *Jews*, made his Birth more Conſpicuous in the World: Snuffing the Candle makes it burn the clearer.

They ſometimes make,

1. *To the improvement of the Church.* One of the ſoreſt Judgments God brought upon the *Jewiſh* Church, is expreſly aſſerted by God to be for their good; *Jer.* 24. 5. ſpeaking of the Captiv'd *Jews*, *Whom I have ſent out of this place into the land of the Chaldeans for their good.* The *Chaldeans* had over-run their Land, carried them Captives, made them Slaves, deſtroyed the Temple; yet God tells them this was for their good; when there was no preſent appearance of any good in it. It ſhould be good in reſpect of Gods Favour towards them, which

retired

retired to return with the greater force; *ver. 6. I will ſet mine eyes upon them for good, I will build them and not pull them down:* God would give them a more durable ſettlement. In reſpect alſo of that frame of heart they ſhould have toward God; their knowledge of him, and cleaving to him: *ver. 7. I will give them a heart to know me, and they ſhall return to me with their whole heart:* God had but a moyety of their hearts before, but then he ſhould have the whole. And indeed it was remarkably for their good; for they who before were addicted to Idolatry, were never guilty of the ſame ſin after: And God kept them from being drawn away to it by the example and ſolicitation of thoſe among whom they were. The Church grows by tears, and withers by ſmiles. Gods Vine thrives the better for pruning. God makes our Perſecutions fit us for that for which we are perſecuted. As *Saul* by his perſecution of *David* for the Title God had given him to the Kingdom, made him fitter to ſucceed him in the Throne, and manage the Government. God uſes perſecutors as lances, which whiles they

wound us, let out the purulent and oppreſſive matter; and makes them inſtruments of his Providence to work out his Peoples Happineſs, and thus makes the very wrath of man to be an occaſion of his Peoples Praiſe; *Pſal.* 76. 10. *The wrath of man ſhall praiſe thee.* God doth in this as a Father deals with his Son, ſends him to a ſharp ſchool, that he may be Trained up in Learning.

2. *In the increaſe of the Church.* The *Jews* Crucified our Saviour to diminiſh the multitude of his followers, and by this means the number is increaſed. The whole World runs after him by that means they uſed to ſtop their Courſe; which Chriſt fore-told, that when he was lifted up, he ſhould draw all men after him; And that a grain of Corn brings not forth more ſeed, unleſs it be caſt into the ground, and dye.

1. *In the increaſe of it within its own bounds.* When the *Iſraelites* were moſt oppreſt in *Egypt*, the more they multi-
Exod. 1. 20. plied *. When the Dragons fury did moſt ſwell againſt the Woman, ſhe
Rev. 12. 1, 3, 4. brought forth a Man-child *. When the *Roman* Empire was at the higheſt,

and

and was moſt enflam'd with Anger againſt the Chriſtians: When the Learning of the Philoſophers, the Witchcrafts of Hereticks, the Power of the Emperors, and the Strength of the whole World was ſet againſt them, the Chriſtians grew more flouriſhing and numerous by thoſe very means which were uſed to deſtroy them. Not only a new ſucceſſion of Saints ſprung up from the Martyrs Aſhes, but their Flames were the occaſion of warming ſome ſo much with a heavenly fire, that ſome Perſecutors have become Preachers. Their very bonds for the Truth have ſometimes a ſeminal Vertue in them to beget men to Faith in Chriſt. *Phil.* 1. 12. *The things which have happened unto me have fallen out rather to the furtherance of the Goſpel.*

2. *In the increaſe of it in other Parts.* *Pauls* Priſon made his Preaching Famous in *Rome*, and was an occaſion of bringing Chriſtianity into *Neroes* Court, that Monſter of Mankind*; one might have looked for Saints in Hell as ſoon: his bonds were as great a confirmation of the Truth of his Doctrine as his Eloquence. When *Saul* made havock of the

* *Phil.* 1. 13. *Phil.* 4. 22

Church, and by that ſtorm diſperſed the Chriſtians, they like ſo many grains of Corn ſcattered in ſeveral parts of a greater Field, produced the greater Harveſt. *Acts* 8. 3, 4. *Therefore they that were ſcattered abroad, went every where preaching the Word.* As Clouds ſcattered by the Winds, they Rain'd down the Goſpel in ſeveral Quarters. The *Jews* when ſcattered in their ſeveral flights, did ſcatter among the Heathen the Notions of the true Religion. When they ſhall go down to *Egypt* to ſecure themſelves from *Senacherib's* Invaſion, they ſhall be a means to make many Converts among that Idolatrous Nation. *Iſa.* 19. 18. *In that day* (the day of the *Jews* Trouble) *ſhall five Cities in the land of Egypt ſpeak the Language of Canaan, and ſwear to the Lord of hoſts*: ſo one expounds it, but I rather think it meant of the times of the Goſpel. The flight of the *Iſraelites* ſhall be the occaſion of ſome *Egyptians* Converſion. A poor Slave in *Naaman's* Family was an occaſion both of the cure of his Body and of that of his Soul; 2 *Kings* 5. 2, 3, 17. So much for the firſt Reaſon, drawn from an enumeration of things.

2. Rea-

2. Reaſon; To prove that all Providence is for the good of the Church; is, *Becauſe God hath ſometimes preferred Mercy to the Church, and Care of it, above his own concernments of Juſtice.* He values his Mercy to them, above his Juſtice upon his Enemies. He conſults their ſafety before he brings ruin upon the Wicked whoſe ſins are full. He firſt prepared the ark for *Noah*, and ſees him lodged in it, before he begins to ſhower down deſtruction upon the World. He hath ſometimes puniſhed a Nation more for their Offences againſt his People, than their Sins againſt himſelf. *Amalek* was guilty of many Idolatries and other ſins againſt God; but God chargeth none of them upon them, but their malicious hindring the *Iſraelites* in their March to *Canaan.* 1 *Sam.* 15. 2. *Thus ſaith the Lord of Hoſts, I remember that which Amalek did to Iſrael, how he laid wait for him in the way when he came up from Egypt.* He ſhews his love to them, and how much he values them, that when he is acting Juſtice and pouring out his Wrath, when he is (as it were) cutting and ſlaſhing on all ſides, and is in fury with wicked Men, he *Secondly.*

he hath nothing but ſweetneſs and tenderneſs towards his own. *Amos* 9. 9, 10. in the ſifting of *Iſrael* and the Nations, *Not the leaſt grain ſhall fall upon the earth. All the ſinners of my People ſhall dye by the ſword.* While he thunders out his Fury upon wicked Men, he hath his Eyes upon the leaſt grain of the true *Iſrael*. What would it be for God, when he is raiſing the Glory of his Juſtice upon the People that have provoked him, not to regard the concernments of this or that or many ſincere Souls, but put no ſtop to his Fury? Yet he doth, not a grain ſhall periſh. He is more deſirous to hear of the preſervation and welfare of a few Righteous, than of the juſt Puniſhment of the Wicked wherein his Juſtice is glorioufly intereſſed. The Man clothed with Linnen, that was to mark the Mourners, return'd to God and gave an account that he had done according to his Command; * the other five, which were to kill, returned not to give any account of their ſevere and ſharp proceeding. The Angels that held the four Winds of the Earth, *Rev.* 7. 1. which ſome underſtand of Wars and Commotions in the World for

*Ezek. 9. 11.

for the overthrow of the *Romiſh* power, were ordered not to let the Winds go, till the ſervants of God were ſealed in their Foreheads.

3. Reaſon; *God takes particular notice of the meaneſt of his People, and mightily condeſcends to them, much more of the Church.* 'Tis ſtrange to conſider that the Scripture mentions none of thoſe great Potentates among the Heathen, but either as they were inſtruments of his Peoples good, or executioners of his Juſtice upon them, or ſubjects of his Peoples Triumph. *Cyrus* and *Darius* are mentioned as their friends: *Nebuchadnezzar* and *Senacherib* and others, as Gods inſtruments in ſcourging them. * *Chedorlaomer* and the other Kings with him as they were the ſubjects of *Abrahams* Valour and Triumph. He takes no notice of the Names of any in his Word, but upon ſuch Accounts: *Cyrus* and *Nebuchadnezzar* had done, no doubt, many actions before, but none taken notice of but thoſe: But he takes notice of the meaneſt wherein was Grace, and the meaneſt of their concerns and actions. *He mentions in his Word *Jacob's* Flocks, &c.

*Gen. 14. 9, 10.

*Rivet in Gen. exercit. 129.

&c. things of no great moment; the actions, ſpeeches, geſtures of his People, to ſhew how his Providence wrought for them, and how much he is concern'd in the leaſt of their Affairs. But the great Empires of the World, their Original and Progreſs, and the magnified Founders of them, he ſpeaks not of, but as they have ſome relation or other to his People. As we love to uſe the names of our Friends, ſo doth God love the relliſh of the names of his ſervants. The name of *Noah* is repeated ſeveral times, as the *Jews* obſerve *. The Spirit of God loves the very mention of their names: he delights to dwell upon the Catalogue of their names. The Scripture uſes to reckon the Genealogies of wicked Men in ſhort characters. *Cains* Generation is numbred in haſte, as if God had no care at all of them *, he puts them off with a kind of *&c.* But he inſiſts much upon the Generation of the Godly. *Seths* Poſterity are written in a larger ſcroul and more legible hand *, with the number of the years which they lived; which in *Cains* Poſterity there is no notice taken of. His whole Reſpect, his Heart, his Eye, his All is fixed upon them.

* *Gen.* 7. *Gen.* 8.

* *Gen.* 7. 17, 18.

* *Gen.* 5. 6,7,8,9. *&c.*

them. And Chriſt himſelf ſtands more aſtoniſhed, and wondring at the Faith of the Centurian, the importunity of the *Canaanitiſh* Woman; condeſcends to them to grant them what they would have. You never find him taking notice of the Learning of the Rabbies, the Magnificence of *Herod*, or the glorious Building of the Temple. See how condeſcending God is, to work a Miracle for the ſupport and ſtrengthning of a weak Faith, and the peeviſh diſtruſt of his People. *Gideons* Faith was weak, yet how compaſſionate is God towards him* in ordering his Providence as *Gideon* would have it, without upbraiding him; juſt as a tender Mother cheriſhes a weak Child? And this Miracle was in order to the Churches Deliverance from a preſent oppreſſive Enemy. Certainly when we find God taking care and ordering even the very Pins, Snuffers and Baſins of the Temple, the place of his Worſhip, as well as the more ſtately Ornaments of it; we may ſay, doth his Care extend to the meaneſt Utenſils in his Temple, and not much more to the Worſhippers in it? Doth he give order for the Candleſticks, and

* *Judg.6. 36. &c. He would have one time the Fleece dry, another time wet; God condeſcends to them in all.*

and will he not have much more care of the lights in them? His care to the leaſt, implies his care of the greateſt too. In a building, the little ſtones muſt be well laid as well as the greateſt. Every Believer is a ſtone in the Spiritual building.

4. Reaſon, *God reveals often to his people what he will do in the World, as if he ſeemed to ask their advice*, and therefore ſurely all his providences ſhall work for their good. God would not ſurely acquaint them, and adviſe with them what he ſhould do, did he intend to do any thing to their hurt. There is not any thing in the heart of Chriſt wherein the Church is concerned, but he doth reveal it to them, *John* 15.5. *I have called you friends; for all things I have heard of my Father, I have made known to you*; he diſcovered all to them, the ends of his coming, his Fathers love, his death and reſurrection, what he would do after his aſcenſion, the progreſs of his affairs, and the glory of Heaven, and the end of all. *John* muſt be the Pen-man of the Revelation, which concerned the future ſtate of the Church in all ages. *Joſeph* muſt know the interpretation of dreams in order to the Churches

ches preſervation. *Moſes* muſt be acquainted with Gods methods in the *Iſraelites* deliverance, with the *Egyptians* ruine. *Daniel* muſt know the future ſtate of the *Eaſtern* parts of the world; he muſt know the turnings of the times, and the end of the World. 'Tis to *Noah* and none elſe, that he immediately diſcovers his intended deſtruction of the World. And all thoſe revelations ended in his peoples advantage; nay, he doth not only reveal, but, as it were, conſult with him in his affairs. God doth as it were unboſom himſelf to *Abraham*, as one friend to another, as it were, adviſeth with him concerning his intention on *Sodom*, *Gen.* 18. 17. *And the Lord ſaid, ſhall* I *hide from Abraham the thing which* I *do*? *i. e.* I will by no means do it, it will not conſiſt with my Love and Friendſhip to him, to hide any thing from him. And ſee the reaſon of it, v. 18. *Seeing that Abraham ſhall ſurely become a great and mighty Nation, and all the Nations of the Earth ſhall be bleſſed in him.* It was firſt his great affection to him, becauſe he had advanced him, and promiſed that a mighty Nation ſhould ſpring out of his Loyns. And he had not withheld

Dan. 10. 11, 19, 20.

withheld from him the ſecret of giving the *Meſſias*, which was a univerſal bleſſing, and ſo many ages were to run out, before it was to be accompliſht; he had diſcovered to him his acts of mercy, and therefore would not hide from him his acts of juſtice; he would know his mind in it, and what he thought of it. And you know the ſtory, how God regulated himſelf by *Abraham*'s prayer, and denyed him nothing, till *Abraham* left off ſueing any more. It would make one conjecture, that if *Abraham* had proceeded farther, he had quite diverted the judgment from *Sodom*. And when the *Iſraelites* had provoked God by a Golden Calf, he would not do any thing againſt them, till he had conſulted *Moſes*, and therefore lays the whole caſe before him, and ſeeks to take him off from pleading with the Lord, and promiſing to make of him a great Nation,* and in ſuch terms, that one would wonder at. *Now therefore let me alone*; As if God did fear *Moſes*'s interpoſition would prevent him and diſſwade him from it. Do not you ſtand in the way; my wrath will cool, if you interpoſe your ſelf; as much as to ſay, God could not do it, unleſs

* *Exod.* 32. 9, 10. *and the Lord ſaid to Moſes, I have ſeen this people, and behold it is a ſtiff-necked people, now therefore let me alone that my wrath may wax hot againſt them.*

leſs *Moſes* gave his conſent: *Moſes* would not be quiet, but pleads the providences of God which had been all for him, the promiſe of God made to *Abraham* concerning them. And he would not leave, till God repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people, *v.* 14. If Angels, as *Calvin* ſaith, are *Gods* counſellours in Heaven, Believers (are as it were) his Counſellors on Earth.

5. *God has given the choiceſt things he hath to his people*; He hath given his Law. The Church is the Sphere, wherein the light of the Goſpel is fixed, and wherein it ſhines, from whence its beams do dart out to others. *Iſa.* 2. 3. *out of Sion ſhall go forth the Law.* The oracles of God, the great things of the Law, as it is phraſed, *Hoſea.* 8. 12. his Covenant and the counſel of his will, are intruſted with the Church. Now this being a mercy which exceeds all other things in the World, is therefore comprehenſive of all other, as the greater comprehends the leſſer. And the *Pſalmiſt* conſiders it as the top-ſtone of all bleſſings; for after ſumming up the Providences of God, he ſhews how God had diſtinguiſhed *Jacob* by more eminent marks of his favour.

Pſal. 147. 19,20. *He ſhews his word to Jacob, his ſtatutes and his judgments unto Iſrael, he hath not dealt ſo with any Nation*; he hath not left ſo rich a Legacy to any, or given any ſo much of his heart. Others are ordered by the word of his power, (for that is meant by word in the foregoing verſe;) but *Jacob* hath the word of his grace too. And this being the choiceſt piece of affection which God hath ſhewn to the Church, implies the making all leſſer providences ſubſervient to it. The Church wherein God hath laid up his Goſpel, and thoſe Souls which are as the Ark, wherein God hath depoſited his Law, ſhall be ſhadowed with the wings of his merciful providence, in a perpetual ſucceſſion of all true bleſſings. All the providences of God are to preſerve his Law in the World; his ſevereſt judgments are to quicken up the Law of nature in men that know no other, and the Law of his Goſpel in men that ſit under it. And he hath given Chriſt to his Church, and thereby hath given an earneſt, that ſtill their good ſhall be promoted: 'Tis not to be thought, that God will ſpare any thing elſe, when he hath given them his Son. The

The Second thing. It *muſt needs be that all providences is for the good of the Church.* Secondly.

1. *All the providence of God is for the glorifying his grace in Chriſt.* The whole Oeconomy or diſpenſation of the fulneſs of time to the latter ages of the World, is for the gathering all things together in him, *Eph.* 1. 10. *that in the diſpenſation of the fulneſs of time he might gather together in one all things in Chriſt, both which are in Heaven, and which are on Earth, even in him.* In him as their head. This was the deſign in all his diſpenſations, both before his coming, and ſince, ever ſince the promiſe made to *Adam*, though it be more manifeſt in the latter Age. This the Apoſtle repreſents as the main purpoſe of God, *v.* 9. This was the myſtery of his will, which according to his good pleaſure he had purpoſed in himſelf, that is, purpoſed in himſelf, as a thing he was mightily pleaſed with; and *ver.* 11. ſaith he, he works all things after, or κατὰ, *according to the Counſel of his own will*, or of that purpoſe which he had purpoſed in himſelf, to gather all things in one, in Chriſt. All the things that God acts, are referred to this as their end, and or- First.

dered by this Counſel as their rule. As it was the deſign of Gods providence to make way for Chriſts entrance into the World, and all the prophecies in the old Teſtament tended to the diſcovery of it; ſo ſince the coming of Chriſt, the end of all is to advance him in reſpect of his headſhip, *Eph.* 1. 22, 23. *and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the Church, which is his body, the fulneſs of him that fills all in all.* God would advance Chriſt to the higheſt pitch, *v.* 21. far above all principality and power, both in this world, and in the world to come; and there is ſtill a fulneſs wanting to Chriſt to compleat him, not any perſonal fulneſs, but a fulneſs belonging to him as Head, which is the advancement God deſigns him. He is already advanced above all principality and power. He is already given as a Head to the Church; but the compleatneſs of it is not till all his members be perfected, to which all his providence in the world doth ultimately tend: Therefore if the deſign of God be to honour Chriſt, and if the ſpiritual happineſs of the Church be part of that Glory and

Fulneſs

fulneſs of Chriſt, it muſt needs be carried on by God, elſe he will want part of his compleatneſs as a Head; But this ſhall not be wanting, ſince, as all things are ſquared according to that Counſel of glorifying Chriſt as Head, ſo all things are acted for believers by that power whereby he raiſed Chriſt from the grave to be their Head, which power is the Copy according to which all acts which reſpect the Church, are framed, *v.* 19. *and what is the exceeding greatneſs of his power to us ward, who believe according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Chriſt when he raiſed him up from the dead.* God intended the good of the Church in this very act of glorifying Chriſt, for he is made the *head over all things to the Church.* As if God then had preſcribed him that order, that the glory he gave him ſhould be alſo managed for the Churches intereſt: Chriſt is Lord of the reſt of the World, but Head of the Church; All things are under his feet, but are not his members; He is Head over all things to the Church, and therefore to every member of the Church, the leaſt as well as the greateſt; and to the whole Church,

even that part of it which is on Earth, as well as that part which is in Heaven, who are compleated. This Church is the fulneſs of Chriſt, he would be bodyleſs without it: therefore ſince Chriſt will be a head without a body, if the Church be not preſerved; in order to the preſervation of it, all things muſt neceſſarily concur by the wiſe diſpoſal of affairs. Therefore ſince they are travelling to be where their head is, he having the government of the world, will make all things contribute aſſiſtance to them in their journey; that Chriſt may have that compleatneſs of glory, which God intends him, he expreſly tells his Father, *John* 17. 10. *that he is glorifyed in his people.* * And at the ſound of the ſeventh Trumpet, *the Kingdoms of this world are to become the Kingdoms of the Lord and of his Chriſt, and he ſhall raign for ever and ever.* * Now ſince all the motions in the world, are, that the Kingdoms of the world may become the Kingdoms of his Chriſt, peculiarly his, as being anointed King by him: It muſt needs be, that all things muſt be ſubſervient one time or other to this end, wherein the good of his people doth

* *John* 17. 10. *And I am glorifyed in them.*

* *Revel.* 11. 15.

doth consist; otherwise they would not bless God so highly for it as they do. **We give thee thanks, O Lord God almighty, because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast raigned.* And where there is a resistance of this glory of Christ, it is a natural effect of that decree whereby Christ is constituted King, that the resisters should be broken in pieces, and dasht like a Potters vessel. *Psal.* 2. 6, 9, and the issue of all is the blessedness of those that put their trust in him, *v.* 12. The care that God hath of Christ and the Church in the types of them, seems to be equal. The Ark which was a type of Christ and the Table of shew-bread a figure of the Church, had three coverings, whereas all the rest of the Vessels, *&c.* belonging to the ceremonial part had but two; * On the Ark there was the vail and covering of badgers skins, and a covering of blew: On the Table of shew-bread there was a cloth of Blew, a cloth of Scarlet, and a covering of badgers skins. God orders as much for the security of the Church, as for the security of Christ; therefore the same things that tend to the glorifying of Christ, shall tend to the advantage of the Church.

* *Revel.* 11. 17.

* *Numb.* 4. 5, 6, 7, 8.

2. *God has given the power of the providential Adminiſtration of things to Chriſt to this very end, for the good of the Church.* If God hath conſtituted him Head over all things to the Church, can there be any doubt but that he will manage the Government for that which is the principal end of his Government, which he hath ſhed his Blood for, and which is chiefly intended by God who appointed him?

1. *All power of Government is given to Chriſt.* Matth. 11. 27. *All things are delivered to me of my Father. And the Father judges no man, but hath committed all judgment to the ſon*; Joh. 5. 22. that is, the whole Government and Adminiſtration of Affairs. 'Tis not to be underſtood of the laſt Judgment, for then it would be a limitation of that word *all*; not that the Father lays aſide all care of things, but as the Father diſcovers himſelf only in him, ſo he governs things only by him. All this power was committed to him upon his interpoſition after the Fall of Man: He was made Lord and Chriſt, that is, anointed by God to the Government of the World. For upon the Fall, God as a Rector, had overturned

all;

all; Man could not with any Comfort have treated with the Father, had not Chriſt ſtept in and pleaded for the Creation, whereupon God commits all judgment to the Son, that he might temper it. It was by Chriſt as a covenanting Mediator, that the Earth was eſtabliſhed*. He had this Government Anciently, and it was confirmed to him upon his death; *Heb.* 1. 3. *Who being the brightneſs of his glory, and the expreſs image of his perſon, and upholding all things by the word of his power.* *Calvin* underſtands the firſt word not only of the Deity of Chriſt, but of the diſcovery the Father made of himſelf in and through him as Mediator. The latter words ſome underſtand both of his Providential and Mediatory Kingdom: *by the word of his power*, this, ſay ſome, is referred to the Father, whoſe image Chriſt is, as acting by a delegated Authority and Commiſſion from his Father: others, to Chriſt; as, that Chriſt upholds or bears up all things by his own powerful word. *Calvin* thinks both may be taken, but embraceth the ſecond as being more generally received.

* *Iſa.* 49.8.

I may offer, whether it may not be meant

meant alſo, of the powerful interpoſition of Chriſt as Mediator; whoſe intereſt in God was ſo great, that he kept up the World by his powerful Interceſſion, when all was forfeited; and God put it, upon that interpoſition, into his hands, as *heir of all things*; (who having a hand with him in Creation, underſtood both the Rights of God and the Duty of the Creature) upon the condition of *purging ſin* by his Death, which he did, and thereupon went to Heaven to take Poſſeſſion of the Government, at the right hand of God; *ſat down*, took his ſeat at the right hand of the Majeſty on high, as due to him by Covenant and Articles agreed on between them. I know nothing at preſent againſt ſuch an interpretation of the words; but I will not contend about it. All this honour was confirm'd unto him upon his Death. For having perform'd the Condition requiſite on his part, God deputes him and intruſts him with the Government of things, that he might order all things ſo, as to ſee the full Travel of his Soul.

2. *All this power was intended by God for this End, the good of the Church.* As God

God appointed Chriſt a Prieſt for his Church to ſacrifice for them, a Prophet to teach them; ſo the other Office of King is conferred upon him for the ſame end, the advantage of the Church. God acquaints us of this End, aimed at by him, in the Promiſe of the Government to him. *Jer.* 33. 15, 16. *In thoſe dayes, and at that time, will I cauſe the branch of righteouſneſs to grow up to David, and he ſhall execute judgment and righteouſneſs in the land*; what is the end? *In thoſe dayes ſhall Judah be ſaved, and Jeruſalem ſhall dwell ſafely.* He ſhould execute Judgment, that is, Adminiſter the Government for the ſalvation of *Judah*, and ſecurity of *Jeruſalem*. It was his Office both to build the Temple, and to bear the Glory, and to Rule upon his Throne; to be a Prieſt upon his Throne, to Rule as King and Prieſt, *Zach.* 6. 12, 13. *He ſhall build the temple of the Lord, even he ſhall build the temple of the Lord.* The erecting a Church is the ſole work of Chriſt by Gods appointment. And he was to bear up the Glory of it. He ſhould rule to this End, *for the Counſel of peace ſhall be between them both.* If by [*both*,] be meant, the

the Lord, and the Man whoſe name is the Branch; it then chiefly aims at our Reconciliation, as wrought by Covenant between them. If by [*both*] be meant the two Offices of King and Prieſt, and that the counſel of Peace be between them; it will extend to all the Bleſſings of the Church, to the good and Glory of the Church, which is the fruit of his Kingly, as well as the firſt Reconciliation was the fruit of his Prieſtly Office. By Peace, in Scripture, is meant the confluence of all Bleſſings; ſo that the intent of God in beſtowing thoſe Offices upon Chriſt, and ſo great a Rule, was for the good and advantage of that Church or Temple, which he appointed him only to build. And in *Iſaiah* 11. 9. where the Prophecy of the Government of Chriſt is, the End is expreſt to be that none ſhould *hurt or deſtroy in all his holy mountain.* And certainly, ſince God ſet him at his right hand, and confirm'd this power unto him, after he had *purged our ſins*; it was certainly out of the high value God had for him, and therefore muſt be the intent of God, that he ſhould govern all things in reference to the deſign of that death,

and

and for the good of thoſe, whoſe ſins he had by himſelf purged. For the poſſeſſing this Government, was the very end why Chriſt died and roſe again; *Rom.* 14. 9. *For to this end Chriſt both died and roſe and revived, that he might be Lord both of dead and living.* If this were Chriſts End in dying and riſing, it was his Fathers End too, who appointed him to Death, and raiſed him by his mighty power. And ſince he was *delivered for our offences, and roſe again for our juſtification*, *Rom.* 4. 25. The Government he is inveſted with, being Lord of the dead and of the living, muſt be for the ſakes of thoſe for whom he was delivered, and for whom he roſe. His Regal power, which was one end of his Death, cannot croſs the other main end, the conſtituting a church and carrying on the good of them that believe. The Government, being in the hands not of God as Creator, but in and through the hands of a Mediator, and that Mediator which both died and roſe again peculiarly for them; therefore it cannot in the leaſt be for their hurt but advantage. The whole management of Chriſts Kingly Office in relation

relation to the Church, is preſcrib'd unto Chriſt by God. God reveals to him what ſhall be done in the World, what acts he ſhall performe for the Church, and gives him a Hiſtory of all that was to be done upon the ſtage, together with an order to communicate it unto his Servants, *Revel.* 1. 1. *The Revelation of Jeſus Chriſt, which God gave unto him, to ſhew unto his Servants* [to be communicated to the whole Church] *things that muſt ſhortly come to paſs.* Whether this Revelation was made to the humane nature of Chriſt at his incarnation, as *Tirinus* thinks, or rather upon his aſcenſion, is not material; The whole Scheme of what was to be done in the World, is revealed here by God to Chriſt: And you find all the motions in the World relating to the Church, and the end of all, is the good of the Heavenly *Jeruſalem.*

3. *All power thus given, and intended for this end, is actually adminiſtred by Chriſt for this end.* Chriſt as the head of the Church, doth like a natural head: It never ſees, nor hears, nor exerciſeth any act of ſence only for it ſelf, but for the good of the whole Body; The eye watches for

for the body, the Tongue ſpeaks for it, the underſtanding contrives for it; every part of the head is active for the whole body. Now Chriſt as head is more bound to act for the Church militant, then for the Church triumphant; becauſe the greateſt part of his work for the Church triumphant, *viz.* the bringing them to Heaven, is already performed. And they are above the reach of all things in the World, and all the actions and motions in the world cannot touch or diſorder them. But the command of God concerning the other part behind, is not yet performed; and even they are the members of Chriſt, as well as thoſe in Heaven. The Apoſtle* ſeems to refer both Chriſts creation and the preſervation of things to this title of headſhip. *All things were created by him and for him, and by him all things conſiſt, and he is the head of the body the Church*, and therefore the conſervation and government of all things ſhall be ſubſervient to the Church, which is the body of this governing Head. The chief ſeat of Chriſts Soveraignty is the Church, *Pſal.* 2. 6. *yet have I ſet my King upon my holy hill of Sion*: And he ſtands upon

* *Col.* 1. 16, 17, 18.

Mount

Mount Sion, *Rev.* 14. 1. The Church is the proper Seat and Metropolis of his Empire, the Royal Chamber of this Great King. All the conqueſts of Princes redound to the advantage of that place, where they fix their Reſidence: He is King of the World, but for the ſake of *Sion*. Chriſt did manage this charge anciently for his People; when *Joſhuah* had paſſed over *Jordan*, and firſt entered upon the conqueſt of *Canaan*, he ſees a man over-againſt him with a ſword drawn in his hand; *Joſhua* 5. 13, 14. *And Joſhua ſaid unto him, Art thou for us, or for our adverſaries? And he ſaid, Nay, but as Captain of the hoſts of the Lord am I now come.* This was Chriſt that came armed for his People, according to his charge, as their Captain and General. It was not an Angel, becauſe *Joſhua* worſhipped him; *ver.* 14. An Angel did not uſe to receive any Worſhip from Men; and he accepts the Worſhip, and commands him to looſe his ſhoe from his foot, for the place whereon he ſtood was holy; *ver.* 15. And the ſame Perſon, *Joſh.* 6. 2. is called *Jehovah*; and there he gives him orders how he ſhould manage his War.

War. Chriſt came here to direct his People in their concerns; He employs his Wiſdom for his Church, as well as his other excellencies. He is called a Counſellor * ; 'tis one of the great Letters in his Name: and this, as the reſt there mentioned, hath a relation to the Church. *For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given.* And the firſt uſe he makes of his Power, after the confirmation of it to us, upon his Reſurrection, is for the Church; *Matth.* 28. 18. *All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth*; all Authoritative Power over Angels, and the affairs of the World; *Go you therefore and teach all Nations, baptizing them,* &c. *and lo, I am with you alwayes, even unto the end of the world.* He commands the Apoſtles to gather a Church among all Nations; and doth, by Vertue of this Authority committed to him, promiſe his Preſence with them, in all ſuch ſervices they ſhould do to this End, even to the end of the World. He promiſes his Spirit and his Providential Preſence; as his Power ſhould endure to the end of the World, ſo the exerciſe of it for this End ſhould run Parallel with the continuance

* *Iſa.* 9. 6.

of it; There ſhould be no alteration or change in this great end of his, as long as the World laſts. How can Chriſt be with them, and that to the end of the world, if all the parts of his providential government were not ordered to ſerve this end, the good of the Church? For the Church is *the fulneſs of him that fills all in all*, *Eph.* 1. 23. that fills all in all places, all in all actions and motions, for the good of his Church which is his body.

Thirdly. 3. *God in the Church diſcovers the glory of all his attributes.* 'Tis in a mans houſe, where his riches and ſtate is ſeen: 'Tis in the Church God makes himſelf known in his excellency more then in all the world beſides. *Pſal.* 76. 1. *In Judah is God known, his name is great in Iſrael, in Salem alſo is his Tabernacle, and his dwelling place in Sion.* 'Tis in his Church he doth manifeſt his power: 'Tis called therefore *a glorious high Throne*, Jer. 17. 12. *a glorious high throne from the beginning is the place of our Sanctuary.* Kings uſe to diſplay all their Glory and Majeſty upon their Thrones; in this ſenſe Heaven is called Gods Throne, *Iſa.* 60. 1. becauſe

becauſe the proſpect of the Heavens affords us diſcoveries of the wiſdom and power of God, more then in any other viſible thing, both in their eſſence, magnitude and motion: So is there a greater diſcovery of Gods attributes in the Church (which is alſo ſtyled Heaven in Scripture,) then in the whole World beſides: There it is that the Angels look to learn more of the Wiſdom of God then they underſtood before. * 'Tis there the day of his power dawns, *Pſal.* 110. 3. 'Tis there his Saints ſee his power and his glory, *Pſal.* 63. 2. the Sanctuary is called the firmament of his power, *Pſal.* 150. 1. The glory of Gods attributes is centered in Chriſt in a higher manner then in the creation, and in that work did excel themſelves in what they had done in the framing of the world; and the Church being the glory of Chriſt, all thoſe attributes which are glorifyed in Chriſt, do in and through him ſhine forth more clearly upon the Church, then upon any other part of the world. He ſtyles himſelf their Creator, as much as the Creator of the whole frame of Heaven and Earth, *Iſa.* 43. 15. *I am the Lord, your holy one,*

* *Eph.* 3. 10.

the Creator of Iſrael, your King. As though all the attributes of God, his power in Creation, his holineſs in redemption, were deſigned for none elſe but them. And indeed by virtne of the Covenant they are to be ſo, for if God be their God, then all of God is theirs. What wiſdom, power, ſufficiency, grace, and kindneſs he hath, is principally for them. If God be their God, it is in their concerns he will glorify himſelf as a God, in the manifeſtation of all his perfections. This cannot be without the ordering all providences for their advantage.

Fourthly. 4. *There is a peculiar relation of God and Chriſt to the Church*; upon which account this Doctrine muſt needs be true. God is ſet out in all relations to manifeſt his great care of his people. He is a Father to provide for them. * A Mother to ſuckle them. * Chriſt is a Husband to love and protect them. * A Brother to counſel them:* And when all theſe Relations meet in one and the ſame perſon, the reſult of it muſt be very ſtrong. Any one relation where there is affection, is a great ſecurity; but here all the relations are twiſted together with the higheſt affections

* *Iſa.* 68. 5.
* *Iſa.* 49. 15.
* *Eph.* 5. 29.
* *John* 20. 17.

fections of them in God to the Church. A Father will order all for the good of his child; a Mother for her Infant; a Husband for his Wife; and one kind Brother for another; So doth God for his People, and whatſoever thoſe Relations bind Men to on Earth, in reſpect of Care, Love and Faithfulneſs, that is God to his Church. The Church hath that Relation to God, which none in the World have beſides. They are his Jewels, therefore he will keep them; they are his Children, therefore he will ſpare them*. They ſhall have protection from him as they are his Jewels, and Compaſſion from him as they are his Sons. The Church is Chriſts Fleſh, as dear to him as our fleſh is to us; as much his as our fleſh is ours. *Eph.* 5 29. *No man hates his own fleſh, but nouriſheth it, as Chriſt doth his Church.* No man can have a higher value for his own fleſh, then Chriſt hath for his Church. The Church, as *Tertullian* ſpeaks, is nothing elſe but *Chriſtus explicatus** ; and as conſidered in Union with Chriſt, is called *Chriſt*; 1 *Cor.* 12. 12. 'Tis the Apple of his eye; *Zach.* 2. 8. A tender and beloved part. The Church

* *Mal.* 3. 17.

* *Chriſt unfolded.*

is Christs Spouse; the contract is made, the Espousals shall be at the last Day. The Members are pick'd out one by one to be presented to the Lamb at last as a Glorious Bride for him. *Rev.* 21. 2.

And all Gods dealings with them in the World, are but preparations of them for that State. Upon the making of the Match, God promises a communion of Goods; *Hos.* 2. 20. *I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness*, which is a fruit of Marriage, the Wife being invested in her Husbands Estate. When God hath given the blood of his Son for the Church, he will not deny her the service of the Creatures, but Joynture her in that as one part of her Dowry. *In that day will I hear the heavens*,&c. *ver.* 21. In what day? in the day of betrothing, in the day of the Evangelical Administration; when the contract shall be made between me and my Church. Heavens, Earth, Corn, Wine and Oil; the voice and motions of all Creatures are for *Jezreel*, which signifies the *seed of God*. This great Prince he hath a care of all his subjects, so more peculiarly of his Spouse and Princess, which is his seed too;

and

and all Creatures ſhall be her Servants. This Fatherly Relation and Affection is ſtrong and pure, not as the love which acts an ambitious man to Ambition, or a covetous man to Wealth, which reſpects nothing but the graſping and poſſeſſing the Objects they dote upon; and have nothing of love for the Objects themſelves, therefore deſerves not the name of Love. But it is the love of a Father, whoſe love is pure towards his children; He ſeeks their good as his own.

Conſider theſe two things.

1. *God hath a peculiar love to this very Relation*, and often mentions it with delight, as if he loved to hear the ſound of it in his own Lips: *Cant.* 8. 12. *My vineyard which is mine, is before me. Me, My, Mine.* The Church is alwayes under his Eye, ſeated in his Affection; and God is pleaſed with his propriety in them. God never calls the World, *My* World, though he created it; ſometimes he ſaith, the Earth is mine, but it is either to check the preſumptions of Men, who aſcribe that to themſelves which is due to the firſt Cauſe; Or to encourage his

People in the expectation of Deliverance, becauſe all things in the Earth are at his beck: Or to ſhew his own ſufficiency, without the ſervices of his People; as when he ſaith, the Earth is mine and the fulneſs thereof: but it is never mentioned in ſuch a way, as to diſcover any pleaſure he hath in the Relation between him and it, ſimply conſidered; but *My* Vineyard, *My* People, *My* Children, *My* Jewels, *My* Sanctuary, very often. So much doth God eſteem his Propriety in them.

2. *This Relation is prevalent with God in the higheſt Emergencies and Diſtreſſes of his People.* The very conſideration that they are his People, kindles his Affection, and enlivens his Strength for them. *Iſa.* 63. 8. *And he ſaid, Surely they are my People, Children that will not lye, ſo he was their Saviour.* God is brought in, as one that had heard the cries of his Church, and had not been moved; but when he recollects himſelf, and conſiders that they were his People, and that he was in a ſpecial manner related to them, he became their Saviour; He could no longer

longer bear it, but ſtirs up himſelf to relieve them. Nay, it hath ſo ſtrong an influence upon him, that if this Note be often ſounded in his Ears, it doth as it were change his Voice; and when he ſeems to have a mind to caſt them off, he cannot. When *Iſrael* had offended by erecting and worſhipping a golden Calf, he calls them no more *his* People, but *Moſes* People; *Exod.* 32. 7. *And the Lord ſaid unto Moſes, Go, get thee down, for thy people which thou broughteſt out of the land of Egypt have corrupted themſelves.* As though God had not been concerned in this Miraculous Conduct out of *Egypt*; And *ver.* 9. *this people*; as if he had had no intereſt in them, but particularizes them with Diſdain. God had here diſcarded them, and turn'd them over upon *Moſes*'s hands, as if he would have no longer any thing to do with them; but *Moſes* in Prayer turns them upon God again, and would not own them as his, but pleads that they were God's proper Goods; *ver.* 11. *Lord why doth thy wrath wax hot againſt thy people, which thou haſt brought forth out of the land of Egypt?* And *ver.* 12. again *thy* People; and God

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at laſt reſumes his former Notes, *ver.* 14; *And the Lord repented him of the Evil he thought to do unto his people.* Now they are Gods People again; the repetition of this Relation, is a powerful Rhetorique to perſwade him to own them again, which he had Caſhiered and turned off.

Fifthly. 5. *The whole intereſt of God in the World lies in his Church and People.* He ſees little of himſelf in any part of the corrupted World, but only in them. 'Tis in the Church he hath put his Name; 'Tis there he ſees his Image, and therefore places his love there; and ſhall all this ſignifie nothing? Shall the Governour of World let things go contrary to his own intereſt? They are like to him in that which is one of his greateſt perfections, *viz.* his Holineſs; which gives him a greater intereſt in them. 'Tis his Intereſt that is oppoſed, by an oppoſition to the Church. All the hatred any bear, it grows from the inward root of enmity againſt God himſelf; *Pſal.* 44. 22. Yea, for thy ſake are we killed all the day long. God ſurely will concern himſelf in the Churches

Churches intereſt, ſince it is his own. His Intereſt lies,

1. *In the Perſons of his People.* 'Tis his Inheritance *. It is his Portion *. *Deut.* 32.9. *The Lords portion is his people, Jacob is the lot of his inheritance.* Every part of an inheritance, and a portion, doth as particularly belong to the owner, as the whole. Every part of the ground which belongs to the Inheritance, is the Heirs, as well as the whole Field. He will not ſuffer the World which is but the work of his hands, to lay waſte his Church which is his proper inheritance. 'Tis his Treaſure, and where a mans treaſure is, there is his heart; and where Gods Treaſure is, there is Gods heart.

* *Iſa.* 19. *laſt.*
* *Deut.* 32 9.

2. *In the ſervices and actions of the Church.* If the Church ſhould be deſtroyed, whom hath God to love and imitate him, and to ſhew forth his Glory? If the Candleſtick is broken, what is fit to hold out the light to the World? He hath none in the World beſides, that do intentionally mind his Honour, that take pleaſure in glorifying his Name,

Name, and writing after his Copy, and obſerving his Works. And will it ſtand with his intereſt to govern things contrary to theirs, which is really his own?

When God had made the World, and pronounced it good, what would it have ſignified, if he had not brought in man as his Rent-gatherer, and the Collector of his Tribute, to return it to him? And what would Man ſignifie? ſince the corrupted World embezles that which is Gods Right, and turns it to its own uſe; if God had not ſome honeſt Stewards, who faithfully act for him, and give him the Glory of his Works? And God will ſpare them as a man ſpares his own Son that ſerves him. God hath no voluntary ſervice in the World but from them; therefore he is more intereſſed in their good, than in the good of the whole World beſides. The ſervices of the Church, are all the delight God hath in the World; *Hoſ.* 9. 10. *I found Iſrael like grapes in the wilderneſs, I ſaw your fathers as the firſt ripe in the figtree at her firſt time.* They are as the refreſhing Wine and Grapes, as the delicious fruit of the firſt ripe Figs; wherewith a weary Traveller

veller recruits his Spirits after a long and tyring journey. And God hath a greater delight in the fruit he receives from the Church, then in it ſimply as it is his inheritance, for no inheritance is valued but for the fruit and revenue it yields, and therefore God orders all his blackeſt providences in the World, like dark clouds to be the watering pots of this his Garden; that the Fruit and Flowers of it may be brought to maturity, which yield him ſo much pleaſure and honour. God only is acknowledged by them and in them, as the *Jews* were bound to acknowledge God the Author of their mercies, by preſenting the firſt fruits of their increaſe to God. And Believers are called ſo, *Rev.* 14. 4. *Theſe were redeemed from among men, being the firſt fruits to God and the Lamb.* 'Tis by and in them that God hath the acknowledgment of all his mercies and bleſſings to the World.

6. *It cannot be but all the providences of God ſhall work to the good of his Church, if we conſider the affections of God.* Sixthly.

1. *His*

1. *His love.* What hath God in the World as an object to beſtow his affections upon, and communicate the rayes of his love unto, ſince he created it, but his Church? The men of the World hate him: He can ſee nothing amiable in them; for what was firſt lovely, they have defaced and blotted out; but the Church hath Gods comlineſs put upon her, *Ezek.* 16. 14. *it was perfect through my comlineſs which I had put upon thee, ſaith the Lord God*; and he did not lay thoſe glorious colours upon her to, manage his government, or any part of it againſt her, to deface her. Beſides their lovelineſs which is conferred upon them by God, they have a love to God, and no man will act againſt thoſe whom he thinks to be his friends. God being *purus actus*, there being nothing but purity and activity in God, his love muſt be the pureſt and higheſt love, the moſt vigorous and glowing: As fire, which ſets all other Bodies, ſo this all other powers in the World in motion for them. God cannot love them, but he muſt wiſh all good to them, and do all good for them; for his love is not a lazy love, but hath its raptures

raptures and tenderneſs, and his affection is twiſted with his Almighty Power to work that good for them, which in their preſent condition in the world they are capable of. Now it is certain God loves his Church: For,

1. *He carries them in his hand,* * and that not in a looſe manner to be caſt out, but they are engraven upon the palms of his hands, * that he cannot open his hand to beſtow a bleſſing upon any perſon, but the picture of his Church doth dart in his eye. God alludes to the Rings wherein men engrave the image of thoſe that are dear to them. And the *Jews* did in their captivity engrave the Effigies of their City *Jeruſalem* upon their Rings, that they might not forget it. * * If his eye be alway upon the Church, his thoughts can never be off it in all his works.

* *Deut.* 33. 3.

* *Iſa.* 49. 16.

* * *Sanctius in Iſa.* 49. 16.

2. *He loves the very gates and outworks.* *Pſal.* 87. 2. *the Lord loveth the gates of Sion.* He loves a Cottage where a Church is, more then the ſtately Palaces of Princes. The gates were the places where they

they consulted together, and gave judgment upon affairs: God loved the assemblies of his Saints, because of the truths revealed, the ordinances administred, the worship presented to him.

3. *Nay one Saint is more valued by him then the whole World of the wicked.* God is the God of all Creatures, but peculiarly the God of *Abraham*, and of his seed: One *Abraham* is more deeply rooted in his heart, then all the World; and he doth more entitle himself the God of *Abraham*, then the God of the whole World; for in that style he speaks to *Isaac*, *Gen.* 26. 24. *I am the God of Abraham thy Father*, much more the God of *Israel*; The God of the whole Church, of which *Abraham* was but a member, though the Father of the faithful, and a Feoffee of the Covenant. God hath a greater value for one sincere Soul, then for a whole City. He saves a *Lot*, and burns a *Sodom*: Yea, then for a whole World, he drowns a World, and reserves a *Noah*: He secures his Jewels, whilst he flings away the pebbles.

4. *He loves them so, that he overlooks their*

their crabbed and perverse misconstructions of his providence. When the *Israelites* had Jealous thoughts of him, and of *Moses* his instrument; when they saw that mighty *Egyptian* Army just at their heels, and themselves cooped up between Mountains, Forts and Waters, God doth not upon this provoking murmuring draw up his cloudy Pillar to Heaven, but puts it in the rear of them, when before it had marched in the van, * and wedgeth himself in between them, and *Pharaoh*'s enraged host, to shew, that they should as soon sheath their swords in his heart, as in their bowels; and if they could strike them, it should be through his own deity, which was the highest expression of his affection: And though they often murmured against his providence after they were landed on the shore, yet he left them not to shift for themselves; but bore them all the way in his armes, as a Father doth his Child; * and bare them like an Eagle upon his Wings. * And God loves them magnificently and royally. *Hos.* 14. 4. *I will love them freely*; * without any doubting, without any reluctancy. I will love thee without any repug-

* *Exod.* 14. 19.

* *Deut.* 1. 31.

* *Deut.* 32. 11.

* *Hosea.* 14. 4.

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nancy in my heart, to draw me back from thee, *for mine anger is turned away*, as the ſtreams of a River quite another way. Now all this conſidered, can the Governour of the World, the King of Saints act any thing againſt his own affections? Yea, will he not make all things ſubſervient to them whom he loves?

2. *His Delight.* See what an inundation of ſweetning joy there was in him, for which he had not Terms of Expreſſion, to ſuit the narrow apprehenſions of Men; *Zeph.* 3 17. *The Lord thy God in the midſt of thee is mighty, he will ſave, he will rejoyce over thee with joy, he will reſt in his love, he will joy over thee with ſinging.* He ſeems in his expreſſion to know no meaſure of his delight in the Church, and no end of it; *I will rejoyce over thee with joy*: Joy ſparkles up freſh after joy: 'Tis his *reſt* where his Soul and all that is within him Centers it ſelf with infinite contentment. *Joy over thee with ſinging*; A Joy that bloſſoms into Triumph. Never had any ſuch charming tranſports in the Company of any he moſt affected, as God hath in his Church; he doth ſo delight

light in the Graces of his People, that he delights to mention them. He twice mentions *Enochs* walking with him.* And certainly God cannot but delight in it more than in the World, because it is a fruit of greater pains than the Creation of the World. The World was created in the space of six daies by a Word; the Erecting a Church hath cost God more Pains and Time. Before the Church of the *Jews* could be settled, he had both a contest with the Peevishness of his People and the Malice of their Enemies. And his own son must bleed and dye, before the Church of the Gentiles could be fixed. Men delight in that which hath cost them much Pains and a great Price. God hath been at too much Pains, and Christ at too great a Price, to have small delight in the Church; will he then let wild Beasts break the Hedges and tread down the fruit of it? shall not all things be ordered to the good of that which is the Object of his greatest delight in the World?

* *Gen.* 5. 22. 24.

7. *The presence of God in his Church will make all providence tend to the good of it.* Seventhly,

It would be an idle uſeleſs Preſence, if it were not operative for their good. *The Lord is there*, is the very name of the Goſpel Church *; what would it ſignifie if it were a uſeleſs Preſence? Chriſt ſtands upon Mount *Sion*, his Throne is in the Church, when the great things in the World ſhall be acted for the Ruine of Antichriſt.* Gods Preſence in his Church, is the Glory and Defence of it; As the preſence of the King is the Glory of the Court. *Zach.* 2. 5. *For I, ſaith the Lord, will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory in the midſt of her.* His preſence is a Covenant-preſence. *Iſa.* 41. 10. *Fear not, I am with thee; be not diſmayed, for I am thy God:* whence follows Strength, Help and Support; *I will ſtrengthen thee, yea, I will help thee, yea, I will uphold thee, with the right hand of my Righteouſneſs:* that is, with my Righteous Power, with my power engaged to thee in a Righteous Covenant. His Preſence and Providence in the World, is in a way of Abſolute Dominion; but in his Church, in a way of Federal Relation. He is the God *of Iſrael*, and God *to Iſrael*, or *for Iſrael** ; yea, and a God *in the midſt*

* *Iſa.* 48. 35.

* *Revel.* 14. 1.

* 1 *Chro.* 17. 24.

midſt of *Iſrael.* Every one of them ſufficient engagements to protect *Iſrael*, and provide for *Iſrael*, and govern every thing for *Iſraels* good. God is under an Oath to do good to *Iſrael*; will he violate his Oath? tear his Seal? break his Covenant, who never broke his League with any of his people yet?

8. *The Prayers of the Church have a mighty force with God to this end.* God is entitled a God hearing Prayer, and what prayers ſhould God hear, if not the prayers of his Church, which aim at Gods Glory in their own good? Though the prayers of the Church may in ſome particular fail, yet in general they do not; becauſe they ſubmit their deſires to the Will of God, which always works what is beſt for them. Eighly.

When God would do any mighty work in the World, he ſtirs up his people to pray for it; and their prayers by his own appointment have a mighty influence upon the Government of the World: For when they come before him in behalf of the Church in general, he doth

indulge them a greater liberty and boldneſs, and as it were a kind of Authority over him, then upon other occaſions of their own: *Iſa.* 45. 11. *Thus ſaith the Lord, the holy one of Iſrael, and his maker, aſk of me things to come, concerning my Sons, and concerning the work of my hands command you me.* God would be more poſitively, confidently and familiarly dealt with, about the concerns of his ſons, though they were things to come to paſs in after Ages. And indeed the prayers of the Church have a powerful and inviſible Efficacy on the great actions and overturnings which are in the World. The Being of the World is maintained by them from ſinking, according to the *Jews* ſaying, *ſine ſtationibus non ſubſiſteret mundus*; (ſtanding in prayer was their uſual prayer-geſture.) And that they have actually ſuch a force is evident, *Rev.* 8. 3, 4. An Angel hath a golden Cenſer with Incenſe, to offer it with the prayers of the Saints, upon the Altar which was before the Throne. And *ver.* 5. the Cenſer wherein their prayers were offered, was filled with the fire of the Altar, and caſt into the Earth; and there were Voices,

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Thundrings, Lightnings, and Earthquakes: When the prayers of the Saints were offered to God, and aſcended up before him, that is, (were very pleaſing to him:) The iſſue is, the Angel fills the Cenſer with fire of the Altar, and thereby cauſes great commotions and alterations in the world; ſignifying that the great changes of the World are an anſwer unto thoſe prayers which are offered unto God, for fire is taken from that altar, upon which they were offered, and flung into the World. And it muſt needs be that the prayers of the Church ſhould have an influence on the government of the World.

1. *Becauſe God hath a mighty delight in the prayers of his people. The prayer of the upright is his delight*, and he loves to hear the Churches voice, *Cant.* 2. 14. *O my dove, let me hear thy voice, for ſweet is thy voice*; [Chaldee] thy voice is ſweet in prayer. In the times of the Goſpel God promiſes that the offerings of *Judah* and *Jeruſalem* ſhould be *pleaſant* to him, *Mal.* 3. 4. When Chriſt ſhall ſit as a refiner, *v.* 3. what is the iſſue of thoſe

prayers, *v.* 5. *I will come near to you to judgment, and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers*, &c. Prayer awakes providence to judge the Enemies of the Church: A Parent delights, not in the bare crying, or the voice of his Child simply considered in it self, but in the significations and effects of it. He delights in the matter of their prayers, it being so agreable to his own heart and will, and in the sence they have of the sufferings of the whole body.

2. *Because Prayer is nothing else but a pleading of Gods promises.* Unto this they are directed by that Spirit which knows the mind of God, and marshals their petitions according to his will. Now as God turns his own decrees and purposes concerning his Church into promises to them, so the Church turns those promises into prayers for them: So that promises being for the good of the Church, and there being an exact harmony between those promises and the Churches prayers, all those providences which are the issue of those promises, and the answer of the Churches prayers, must needs

be

be for the Churches good.

3. *Becauſe there are united ſupplications and pleadings both in Heaven and Earth*; all the hands of the whole Family in Heaven and Earth are concerned in their petitions.

1. *Chriſt intercedes for the Church*, who alwaies deſires mercy and deliverance for them in the appointed time, *Zach.* 1. 12. *How long wilt thou not have mercy on Jeruſalem?* and the iſſue is alwaies gracious: For, *v.* 13. God *anſwers* him with *good and comfortable words*; and thereupon *Carpenters* are raiſed to cut off the *horns which had ſcattered Judah*, v. 20.

2. *Angels in all probability plead for the Church*, as we have already heard: 'Tis likely they offer and preſent that to God which makes for his glory, and that is the good of the Church. Angels ſurely deſire that which their Head doth, which is * deſcribed as one of their own order, and called an Angel. Do they rejoyce at the repentance of a ſinner, and do they not likewiſe triumph at the happi-

* *Zach.* 1. 12.

neſs

neſs of the Church, which is part of that Family they are of? And we know, that the greatneſs of our joy is ſuted to the mercies of our deſires; where our joy is moſt triumphant, it implies that our deſires before were moſt vehement.

3. *Glorifyed Saints are not ſurely behind.* The rich man in the Parable deſired his Friend on Earth might not come into that place of torment. * If there be ſo much charity in Hell, can there be leſs in Heaven? If he deſired it, that by the preſence of his Companions in ſin, his own torments might not be increaſed, Do not the Saints in Heaven deſire the preſence of the whole Church, that there happineſs in that of the whole body may be compleated? If the Head Chriſt be not compleat without the body, the members of the body cannot be compleat without one another. The Souls of them that were ſlain for the word of God, cry under the Altar for vengeance on them that dwell on the Earth, as *Revel.* 6.9, and 10. *How long, O Lord holy and true, doſt thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the Earth?* Will not

* *Luk.* 16. 28.

not their kindneſs to their fellow-mem-
bers, be as ſtrong as their juſtice, And
their love for the good of their friends
draw out their prayers as well as their
deſire of vengeance on their Enemies?
Why may they not as well pray for us,
as we praiſe God for them? Had they
not ſome likeneſs to their great Maſter
whilſt they were on Earth, and ſhall
they not be more like to him now they
are in Heaven, and behold his face, and
feel all the ſtirrings of his heart? And if
they have no ſence at all of the Churches
ſufferings, how ſhall they be like to him
who hath? As their bodies ſhall be like
the glorious body of Chriſt at the reſur-
rection, are not their Souls now like his
glorious Soul, merciful, and compaſſio-
nate, and ſympathizing in all the afflicti-
ons of the Church; and can this be with-
out ſome breathings for a full compleating
of the Churches freedom? Are ſuch deſires
and pleas any hindrance to their preſent
happineſs? 'Tis ſo far from that, that it
doth rather further their glory, which
cannot be compleat, as the glory of
Chriſt, as head, is not mounted to the
higheſt pitch of glory, till his myſtical
body

body be all gathered in and lodged with him. If it be thus, will God do any thing prejudicial to the Church, and contrary to the combin'd desires of all those that are so neer him? If God doth sometimes stir up himself upon the supplication of one man, and grant an order upon his petition according to his mind, and if the prayers of one faithful *Moses* or *Elias* or *Samuel* have such a kind of Almighty power in them, much more is the joynt force of so many prayers twisted together.

Use. *Use.* 1. *For information.* Is it is so that all providence is for the good of the Church? Then,

1. *God will alwaies have a Church in the World, he will have some to serve him.* The whole course of his providence being designed for it; As long as the world, which is the object of his providence, doth endure, he will have a Church. God would otherwise lose the end of the motion of his eyes, * the operation of his providence, since it is to shew himself strong for the Church and every member

The Text.

member of it. As long as the candle and light of the Goſpel burns and ſhines, God will have a candleſtick to ſet the candle in. * His great deſign in making a World, was not to have Sun, Moon and Stars, but a Church, a company of men that might bear his mark, and honour him, to whom he might ſpeak, and extend his grace abroad, which he was ſo full of within. As a Limner, who would draw an excellent draught, draws his deſign in the midſt of the cloth, and fills the void places with clouds and landskips, and other fancies at his plea-ſure, which communicate ſome beauty and luſtre to the work: But that was not the principal deſign of the Workman. That redeemer which bears the Church upon his heart, will create a ſtability for it; 'tis a part of his Prieſtly Office to have a care of the Lamps: 'Tis one of his Titles to be he that walks in the midſt of the Seven Golden Candleſticks. * Prieſts under the Law were to look to the great Candleſtick in the Temple, ſupply the Lamps with Oyl, and make them clean.* The Church indeed may be eclipſt, but not extinguiſhed; if it be not conſpicuous on

* *Cham. les trais vrit. liv. 3. Chap. 1. p. 16.*

* *Revel. 2. 5.*
* *Levit. 24. 3, 4. Chap. 27. 20. Chap. 30. 8.*

on the mountain, yet it ſhall be hid in the Wilderneſs. There ſhall be ſprinklings of profeſſors among all people. God will leaven the places where they are into Chriſtianity, and cauſe them to fructify and grow up in purity and glory: *And the remnant of Jacob ſhall be in the midſt of many people, as a dew from the Lord, as the ſhowers upon the graſs, that tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the Sons of men. It tarries not for man.* It attends not the power of man, the precepts of man, or inventions of man; but whoſe deſcent is from Heaven, and is carried on not by humane power, but by the divine Spirit and providence: It ſhall be firmer then all worldly power, and the ſtrongeſt Kings, *Iſa.* 2. 2. *And the Mountain of the Lords houſe ſhall be eſtabliſhed upon the top of the Mountains, and ſhall be exalted above the hills.* Above Mountains and Hills, to which ſometimes the powers of the World are compared, *Zach.* 4. 7. That providence which gave the Church at firſt a footing in the world upon a weak foundation to outward appearance, in ſpight

* *Micah.* 5. 7.

Zach. 4. 7.

of

of Men and Devils, will preſerve it, and not ſuffer it to be blown up, he will ſhadow the Church with his wings in a perpetual ſucceſſion of the choiceſt mercies.

2. *God will in the greateſt exigencies, find out means for the protection of his Church.* This will be till his providence be at an end. When God hath removed one inſtrument of his Churches protection, he hath his choice of others, whom he can raiſe and ſpirit for his work. When thoſe upon whom the Churches hopes hang, are taken off; he can raiſe things that are unlikely, to ſupply the place. As the Luteniſt accidentally had a Graſshopper leapt upon his inſtrument, to ſupply by its noiſe the place of a ſtring which had newly crackt, whereby his Muſick was continued without interruption. God can Spirit men againſt their own natural fears. It was very improbable, that *Nicodemus*, one of a fearful diſpoſition, who came to our Saviour by night for fear of the *Jews*, ſhould have the courage to aſſert his cauſe in the face

of

of a whole counſel of Phariſees, contriving his death; and at preſent blunt the edge of their malice, though we read of none at that time in the counſel to ſecond him: * The holy Ghoſt takes particular notice that it was he that came to Jeſus by night.

* Joh. 7. 50, 51.

Joſeph of *Arimathea*, whoſe name we meet not with in the Catalogue of any of our Diſciples, till the time of his death, and then he appears boldly to beg the body of Jeſus of *Pilat*. God will never want inſtruments for the preſerving that Church, which he owns as his. 'Tis obſerved by ſome, that God ſo ordered it that the ſame day, that *Pelagius*, the great poyſoner of the Chriſtian Doctrin was born in *Brittain*; *Auſtin* the moſt famous defender of the truth was born in *Africk*; That the horn, which puſhed the truth, ſhould no ſooner appear, but the Carpenter to cut it off, ſhould be provided too. As it is obſerved where poyſons grow, Antidotes grow neer them by the indulgent proviſion of the God of nature.

As

As there is the Wiſdom of the Serpent againſt the Church, ſo there is the Wiſdom of God for it. Gods Goodneſs upon His Church in former Ages is not all laid out: He hath his Stores ſtill, neither is his Wiſdom non-pluſt, nor his Power weakned, neither is he, nor can he be weary of his care.

3. *The Church ſhall in the end prove Victorious againſt all its Adverſaries*, or Providence muſt miſs of its Aim. The Church is compared to an Olive Tree, *Hoſ.* 14. 6. In reſpect of Beauty, *his Beauty ſhall be as the Olive Tree.* It is ſo alſo in reſpect of Victory. Olive Branches were uſed in Triumph. God is on the Churches ſide, and he is ſtronger than the ſtrongeſt, and wiſer than the wiſeſt, and higher than the higheſt. Jeſus Chriſt is the Churches Head and General: Chriſt the Head watcheth for the good of the Church, the Body. He muſt be deſtroyed before the Church can. There is a mighty Arm, which though it may for a time ſeem withered, will in the end be ſtretched out, and get it ſelf the Victory. Whilſt Chriſt is in the Ship it may be toſſed,

but it ſhall not be ſunk. It may be beaten down, but like a Ball to rebound the higher. The young Tree that is ſhaken by the wind may loſe ſome leaves, and ſome fruit too, but the root gets greater ſtrength and ſtrikes it ſelf deeper into the Earth, and makes the Branches more capable of a rich return of Fruit the following year. The Churches Stature is compared to a Palm-Tree * which cannot be depreſt by the weights which hang upon it, but riſeth the higher. God uſes the ſame method in the Churches as in Chriſts advancement. Our Saviours Death was neceſſary to his Glory *, And the Churches affliction ſometimes to its exaltation. A Nation may loſe ſome Battels and yet be Victorious: The Church may have many a croſs, but in the end will ſurmount all difficulties: Though Judgments and Apoſtacies may be great in a Nation, yet God will have a care of his own Plants. * *There ſhall be a tenth, It ſhall return, the Holy Seed ſhall be the ſubſtance thereof:* As a Tree in Winter which ſeems dead, but its juyce ſhall revive into rich and generous Bloſſoms.

*Cant. 7. 7.

* Luk. 24. 26.

*Iſa. 4. 12, 13.

ſoms. The Ark ſhall float above the waters. *Babylon* ſhall fall, the Lamb ſhall ſtand upon Mount *Sion*, Men may as well ſtop the riſing of the Sun in its mounting to the *Meridian*, Bridle in the Tyde of the Ocean, as hinder the Current of an Almighty Providence.

4. *The intereſt of Nations is to bear a reſpect to the Church, and countenance the Worſhip of God in it.* This is to concur with Gods main end, and imitate him in his Providential Adminiſtrations. Gods people, (whatever their Enemies ſuggeſt to the contrary) are a Bleſſing in the midſt of a Land *; their intereſt is greater than the intereſt of all the World beſides, though they be but a handful their fruit ſhall ſhake like *Lebanon* *. The neglect of Religion is the Ruine of Nations. 'Tis obſerved that *Cyrus* was ſlain in the War in *Scithia*, a little after he neglected the building of the Temple of *Hieruſalem* which he had begun. Thoſe *Perſian* Kings Reigned the longeſt, that favoured the *Jews* in that and their other juſt requeſts: God Honoured or Diſgraced them as they were kind or cruel to his

* Iſa. 19. 24.

* Pſal. 72. 16. *Broughton* on *Dan.* 10 20.

People. And when any act for the good of his People, they shall not be without their Reward. When *Cyrus* should let the *Jewish* Captives go free without Ransom, he should be no loser by it. God would give him the labour of *Egypt*, the Merchandize of *Ethiopia*, & the strength of the *Sabeans* into his hand for the price of his Peoples Delivery *. Those Nations which should favour them in the times of their Persecutions and Flights, & give them shelter in their Countreys, should thrive and prosper by the blessing of God upon them. If *Moab* give entertainment to the flying *Israelites* in the time of the Invasion of *Salmanassar*; God will preserve their Land that the Spoyler shall not enter into the Confines of it, and they shall have Kings and Judges under the Protection of the House of *David*; *i. e.* under the Kings of *Israel*, (as some understand it*.) Saints are the Guardians of the Places where they live, their Prayers have a greater influence than the wisest Counsels or the mightiest Force. * *And* Elisha *cried my Father, my Father the Chariot of* Israel *and the Horsemen thereof.* The *Chaldee* paraphraseth

* Isa. 45. 13, 14.

* Isa. 16. 4, 5.

2 Kings 2. 12,

phraſeth thus. Thou art better to *Iſrael* by thy Prayers than Chariots and Horſemen. This is the Elogy of one ſingle Prophet, what influence then hath the whole Church of God in a place? The whole world is the better for the Church of God. The *Chaldee* Paraphraſe hath a notion upon that, *Pſalm* 22. 3. *But thou art holy oh thou that inhabiteſt the Praiſes of Iſrael:* Thou that eſtabliſheſt the World for the Praiſes of *Iſrael*. God hath nothing to do in the World but the ſaving his People: When that is once done, he will put an end to this Frame of things: When he hath gathered his Wheat into his Garner, he will burn up the Chaff. His People are the Spirit and Quinteſcence of the World: When this is extracted, the reſt are flung upon the Dung-hill, as a *Caput Mortuum*.

5. We may ſee hence the *ground of moſt of the Judgments in the World*. Men by their rage againſt the Church, will not acknowledge God's Government of the World for the Churches good: Therefore the Pſalmiſt, *Pſal.* 59. 13. *Conſume them in Wrath, conſume them that they may not be, and let them know*

that God rules in Jacob *unto the ends of the Earth.* The Church is the Seat of his Government, and from thence he extends it to the uttermoſt parts of the Earth. In *Jacob* he rules, and for the ſake of *Jacob* he orders his Government to the ends of the Earth: The not acknowledging this brings wrathfull Conſumptions upon men: And it is alſo, the end of his Judgments, to make men know it. 'Tis likely enough the four Kings * might have gon clear away with all their Booty had not they laid their fingers upon *Lot*: But when they would Pack him up among the reſt, they did but ſollicit their own Ruine and arm the Almighty God againſt them. God did not think any of the People worth the mention, *verſe* 11. only *Lot* a righteous perſon, *verſe* 12. he is named as having Gods eye only upon him. And when *Abraham* returns from the Victory, *v.* 16. the reſt of the delivered Captives are mentioned in the bulk, *Lot* only in particular. As though all that had been done, had been done by God only for *Lots* ſake. They might have preſerved the whole Prey

* Gen. 14.

to

to themſelves, had it not been for this Jewel too precious in Gods accompt for their Cuſtody. And the fearful Curſe that God pronounced againſt the *Ammonite* and *Moabite* that they ſhould not come into the Congregation for ten Generations, though any of them turned Proſelytes, was becauſe they came not out with ſo much as Bread and Water to meet the *Iſraelites*, and becauſe they hired *Balaam* to Curſe them. The utter waſting of Nations and Kingdoms is becauſe they will not ſerve the intereſt of God in his People. *Iſa.*60.12. *For the Nation and Kingdom that will not ſerve thee ſhall periſh, yea, thoſe Nations ſhall be utterly waſted:* God will bring an utter Conſumption upon thoſe people that refuſe to love them, much more upon thoſe that hate them. Deut. 23. 3, 4.

6. *What eſteem then ſhould there be of the Godly in the World?* The Providence of God, being chiefly for the good of his People, cannot well fall upon them but ſome drops will fall upon thoſe involved with them in a common intereſt. When the Corn and Wine and Oyl heat *Jezreel* (the

Seed of God) and the Earth hears the Corn, and the Heavens hear the Earth, and God hears the Heavens *: When their ſupplications come up to the great Superintendent of the World: many of the Wicked will fare the better for that Providence which is given only in anſwer to *Feſreels* Prayer: God cauſes his Sun to ſhine upon the unjuſt, upon them, not for their ſakes. When *Nebuchadnezzar* iſſued out that unjuſt order for the ſlaying the *Chaldeans* for not performing an impoſſible command in telling him the Dream he had forgotten, *Daniel* was ſought out to undergo the ſame fate: Yet by his Wiſdom God bends the heart of *Arioch* the Executioner of this Decree to ſtay his hand. *Daniel* goes to the King, God ſtayes *Nebuchadnezzars* Fury and moves his heart to give them time. The Providence is chiefly intended for the preſervation of *Daniel* and his Godly Companions, but the reſt of the wiſe men have the Benefit of it. As the water with which a man waters his choiceſt Plants and Flowers in his Garden is intended only for them, yet ſome falling off from thoſe

* Hoſ. 2. 21, 22.

* Dan. 2. 12.

thoſe Flowers refreſheth the Weeds that grow under them. If God had not had ſuch flowers as *Daniel* and his Companions, the Weeds in *Chaldea* had been plucked up. Yet the ungrateful World takes no notice of the benefits they receive from this Salt of the Earth, which preſerves them, and to whom they are all ſo much beholding. *Lot* had been the occaſion of reſtoring *Zoar* from Captivity, as I mentioned before, for the Inhabitants of that City were engaged with thoſe of *Sodom* in the Fight againſt the four Kings, *And the King of* Bela, *the ſame is* Zoar; And perhaps were carried Captives with the reſt of their Neighbours: And it had been ſaved from the Flames which fell upon *Sodom* meerly by *Lots* prayer, *Gen.* 19. 21. *See I have accepted thee concerning this thing, that I will not overthrow this City for the which thou haſt ſpoken,* yet he found them a ſurly people, and was requited with a rude reception notwithſtanding his kindneſs, *verſe* 30. *He went up out of* Zoar, *for he fearea to dwell in* Zoar: It was not likely he was ſo diſtruſtful of God Gen. 14.8.

God that he ſhould overthrow it, when he had abſolutely promiſed him the contrary: Therefore moſt likely for ſome churliſh threatnings from them. Nay, *Sodom* it ſelf was beholding to him for a ſmall reſpite of the Judgment intended againſt them. For God tells him he could do nothing till he were come thither *. And it was ſo, for *Lot* was entred into *Zoar* before a drop of Brimſtone and Fire was rained down upon *Sodom* *. *Then the Lord rained upon* Sodom, when? when *Lot* was entred into *Zoar*. This good the Wicked World get by Gods People is ſo evident that ſometimes wicked men cannot but take notice of it. *Laban*, a ſelfiſh Idolater was ſenſible of it, *Gen.* 30. 27. *I have found by experience that the Lord hath bleſſed me for thy ſake.* It was a Leſſon ſo legible, that he might have learned it ſooner than in fourteen years. The Church is the chief object of preſervation, wicked men are preſerved for their ſakes; as Dung is preſerved, not for its own ſake, but for the manuring a fruitful field, and Thorns in the Hedge are preſerved for the Gardens ſake.

* Gen. 19.

* Ver. 23, 24.

7. 'Tis

7. *'Tis then a very fooliſh thing for any to contend againſt the welfare of Gods People.* 'Tis to ſtrive againſt an Almighty and unwearied Providence. Men may indeed ſometimes be ſuffered by God for holy ends to have their Wills, in ſome meaſure upon the Church, but not altogether: They muſt firſt depoſe him from his Throne, blind his eyes, or hold his Arm. 'Tis as fooliſh as if a worm ſhould deſign to dig down a Mountain, or Chaff to Martial it ſelf in Battle Array againſt the Wind, or for a poor Flye to ſtop the motion of a Milſtone.

1. 'Tis fooliſh, *Becauſe it is exceeding ſinful.* What is done againſt the Church is rather done againſt God than againſt it. Since all her Conſtitution, Worſhip, Obſervances are directed to God as their ultimate end, ſo that to endeavour to deſtroy the Church is to deny God a Worſhip, deprive him of his Sanctuary, break open his Houſe, Raviſh his Spouſe, cut off Chriſt's Body, rob him of his Jewels, and will be ſo interpreted by God at the laſt, upon the ſcanning of things. If the Church be Gods houſe,

houſe, the Enemies ſhall anſwer for every Invaſion, every forcible Entry, for the breaking down the Gates and Bars of it, God will ſue them at laſt for dilapidations.

2. *Very unſucceſsfull* Shall God be afraid of the multitudes and power of Men? *No more than a Lyon, or a young Lyon roaring after his Prey, when a multitude of Shepherds are called forth againſt them, ſhall he be afraid of their voice,* * Iſa. 31. 4. *or abaſe himſelf for their noiſe.* * Noiſe and Clamor is all they can do, and that not long: The fierceneſs of the Lyon quickly ſcatters them. The Aſſociations, and mens girding themſelves againſt the Church is but a preparation to their own Ruine, *Iſa.* 8. 9. *Aſſociate your ſelves together oh ye People, and ye ſhall be broken in pieces,* three times repeated. Your Counſels ſaith he ſhall not ſtand againſt that preſence of God that is with us, *For God is with us.*

3. *It is very Deſtructive too.* God will not alway be ſtill and refrain himſelf: he ſeems to do ſo for a while, but when he doth ariſe he will deſtroy and * Iſa. 42. 14. devour at once *, he will make but one morſel

morſel of them. When God is angry with his people and gives them into the hands of men to execute his Juſtice upon them and puniſh them, he will even puniſh thoſe enemies for their Cruelty and going beyond their Commiſſion, in ſatisfying their own immoderate Paſſions upon them. Upon this account God threatens *Babylon*, Iſa. 47. 6. *I was wroth with my People, I have polluted mine Inheritance and given them into thy hand, thou didſt ſhew them no Mercy*, whereupon God threatens them afterwards, &c. ſo *Zach.* 1. 15. God was ſore diſpleaſed with the Heathen, for when he was but a little diſpleaſed with his people, they helped forward the affliction.

Uſe. 2. Is *for Comfort.*

If all the Providence of God be for the good of the Church. If his eyes run to and fro to ſhew himſelf ſtrong for them, it affords matter of great comfort. His Providence is continual for them *, he hath ſeven pipes to convey kindneſs to them as well as ſeven Lamps whereby to diſcern their ſtreights. His Providence is as vaſt as his

*Zech. 4. 2

his omniſcience: The number of Pipes belonging to the Candleſtick of the Church is exact according to the number of Lamps. The Churches miſery cannot be hid from Gods eye, let it be in what part of the Earth ſoever, for his eyes run to and fro throughout the whole Earth: and his ſight excites his ſtrength. Upon the ſight of their diſtreſſed condition, he watches only for the fitteſt opportunity to ſhew himſelf ſtrong for them. And when that opportunity comes, he is ſpeedy in the Deliverance of them, *Pſal.* 18. 10. *He rode upon a Cherub and did flye, yea, he did flye upon the wings of the Wind.* He doth not only ride upon a Cherub, but flye. His wings are nothing but wind which hath the quickeſt and the ſtrongeſt motion, which moves the greateſt bodies and turns down all before it. What is for the good of the whole hath an influence upon every Member of the Body.

1. *'Tis comfort in Duties and ſpecial Services.* Nothing ſhall be wanting for encouragement to Duty and ſucceſs in it, when God calls any to it, ſince all his Providence is for the good of the Church.

Church. Let there be but ſincerity on our parts, in our attempts of ſervice upon Gods call, and we need not fear a want of Providence on Gods part: God never calls any to ſerve his Church in any ſtation but he doth both Spirit and encourage them. God hath in his common Providence ſuited the nature of every Creature to that place in which he hath ſet it in the World; and will he not much more in his ſpecial Providence ſuit every one to that place he calls them to, for the ſervice of his Church! He did not forſake Chriſt in redeeming his Church, neither will he forſake any in aſſiſting his Church. When *Joſeph* of *Arimathea* would boldly demand the body of our Saviour, Providence made the way plain before him, he meets with no check, neither from *Pilate* nor the Prieſts *.

* Mat. 27. 58. Mark 15. 43.

2. *In meanneſs and lowneſs.* 'Tis one and the ſame God that rules the affairs of the whole World, of the Church and of every particular Member of it. As it is the ſame Soul that informs the whole Body, the meaneſt Member as well as that which is moſt excellent.

Not

Not the meaneſt ſincere Chriſtian but is under Gods eye for good. The Spirit acts and animates every Member in the Church, the weakeſt as well as the moſt towring Chriſtian. *Baruch* was but the Prophet *Jeremy's Amanuenſis* or Scribe, and Servant to *Jeremy*, (who was no great man in the World himſef) yet God takes notice ſo of his Service, that he would particularly provide for him, and commands *Jeremy* in a way of Prophecy to tell him as much, *Jer.* 45. 5. *I will bring Evil upon all fleſh, but thy life will I give unto thee for a Prey whitherſoever thou goeſt.*

3. *In the greateſt Judgments upon others.* In an Epidemical Judgment upon the whole Nation of the *Jews*, God would have a ſpecial care of *Baruch*. If he ſhould caſt his people far off among the Heathen and ſcatter them among the Countries, yet even there he would be a little Sanctuary unto them. His own preſence ſhould ſupply the want of a Temple, ſo he is pleaſed to expreſs himſelf. * But how is it poſſible the great God can be but a little Sanctuary. His eye is upon them to ſee their danger,

* Ezek. 11: 16.

and

and his hand upon them to ſecure them for it. His Promiſe ſhall ſhield them and his Wings ſhall cover them *. While he hath indignation, he hath a ſecret Chamber for their ſecurity. * An Almighty ſhadow, under which they may abide *. In times of the moſt devouring danger, he hath a Seal to ſet upon their foreheads as a mark of his ſpecial Protection. We never have ſo much experience of Gods care and ſtrength as in times of Trouble, *Pſal.* 37. 39. *He is their ſtrength in time of Trouble.* He is a friend who is as able as willing, and as willing as able to help them, whoſe watchfulneſs over them is as much above their apprehenſion as it is above their merits.

* Pſal. 91. 4.
* Iſa. 26. 20.
* Pſal. 91. 1.

4. *In the greateſt extremities wherein his people may be*; there are promiſes of comfort *. Both in overflowing waters and ſcorching fires he will be with them. His Providence ſhall attend his Promiſe, and his truth ſhall be their Shield and Buckler, *Pſal.* 91. 4. That ſurely is a ſufficient ſupport; Chriſt thought it ſo, when he only ſaid to his Diſciples, *'tis I, be not afraid* *.

* Iſa. 43. 2.
* Joh. 6. 17, 18.

What though there be a Storm, a darkneſs and trouble, *'tis I am he.* The darkneſs of the night troubles not the Pilot whilſt he hath his Compaſs to ſteer by. If all his Providences be for the good of them that fear him, he can never want means to bring them out of trouble becauſe he is always actually exerciſed in governing that which is for their good, and till he ſees it fit to deliver them he will be with them. Great Mercies ſucceed the ſharpeſt Afflictions.

* Jer. 30. 5,6,7. &c. * When there ſhould be a voice of trembling, and men with their hands upon their Loins as women in Travel, and paleneſs in their faces, from the exceſs of their fears: In that day God would break the Yoak from them, and they ſhould ſerve the Lord their God, and *David* their King. Though the night be never ſo dark yet it is certain the Sun will riſe and diſperſe its light next morning and one time or other ſhew its ſelf in its brightneſs: We have no reaſon to diſpond in great extremities, ſince he can think us into ſafety, *Pſal.* 40. 17. *Lord think on me,* much more look us into it; his thoughts and

and his eyes move together.

5. *In fear of wants.* The power of the Governor of the World cannot be doubted. His love as little as it ſeems ſince it hath moved him to prepare Heaven to entertain his people at the end of their Journey, it will not be wanting to provide accommodation for them upon the way, ſince all things both good and bad are at his beck, and under the government of his gracious Wiſdom. His eyes run to and fro through the whole Earth, not only to defend them in dangers, but ſupply them in wants: for his ſtrength is ſhewed both ways. Doth he providentially regard them that have no reſpect for him, and will he not employ his power for, and extend his care to them that adore and love him and keep up his honour in the World? He will not ſurely be regardleſs of the afflictions of his Creatures. His people are not only his Creatures but his new Creatures, their bodies are not only created by him, but redeemed by his Son. The purchaſe of the Redeemer is joyned to the Providence of the Creator. If he took care

of you when he might have damned you for your ſins, will he not much more ſince you are Believers in Chriſt. And he cannot damn you Believing unleſs he renounce his Sons Mediation and his own Promiſe. A natural man provides for his own, much more a Righteous man, *Prov.* 19. 22. *A good man leaves an Inheritance to his Children*, much more the God of Righteouſneſs, a God who hath his eye always upon them. His eye will affect his heart, and his heart ſpirit the hand of his Power to relieve. He hath *prepared of his goodneſs for the poor.* Pſalm 68. 10.

6. *'Tis comfort in the low eſtate of the Church at any time.* Gods eye is upon his Church, even whilſt he ſeems to have forſaken them. If he ſeem to be departed, it is but in ſome other part of the Earth to ſhew himſelf ſtrong for them, where ever his eye is fixed in any part of the World, his Church hath his heart, and his Churches relief is his end. Though the Church may ſometimes lye among the Pots, in a dirty condition, yet there is a time of Reſurrection when God

God will reſtore it to its true glory, and make it as white as a Dove with its Silver wings * The Sun is not alway obſcured by a thick Cloud, but will be freed from the darkneſs of it. *God will Judge his People and repent himſef concerning his Servants* *: 'Tis a comfort to God to deliver his people, and he will do it in ſuch a Seaſon when it ſhall be moſt comfortable, to his Glory & their Hearts. The very name *Hieruſalem*, ſome derive from *Fireh Salem, God will provide in Salem.* The new *Ferusalem* is the title given to Gods Church, *Rev.* 1. and is ſtill the object of his Providence, and he will provide for it at a pinch, *Gen.* 22. 14. *Jehovah Jireh.* God will raiſe up the honour and beauty of his Church: Great men ſhall be ſervants to it and employ their ſtrength for it when God ſhall have mercy on it *: Yea, the Learning and Knowledg of the world ſhall contribute to the building of it, v. 13. *The glory of* Lebanon *ſhall come unto thee, the Firr Tree, the Pine-Tree, and the Box together to Beautifie the place of my Sanctuary. It ſhall be called the City of the Lord, the Sion of the holy one of*

* Pſal. 68. 13.

* Pſal. 135. 14. יתנחם Comfort himſelf.

* Iſa. 60 10, 11, 12.

Iſrael, *that ſhe may know that the Lord is her Saviour, and her Redeemer the mighty one of* Jacob. As Chriſt roſe in his Natural, ſo he will in his Spiritual Body. If Chriſt when dead could not be kept from Riſing, Chriſt now living ſhall not be hindred from raiſing and helping his Church. His own Glory is linked with his Peoples ſecurity, and though he may not be moved for any thing in them becauſe of their ſinfulneſs, he will for his own name, becauſe of its Excellency * *Ezek.* 36.22. *I do not this for your ſakes, O houſe of Iſrael, but for my holy names ſake.* As Sorrows encreaſed upon the *Iſraelites* the nearer their Deliverance approached.

* Ezek. 36.

Becauſe this Method of God is the greateſt ſtartling even to good men, let us conſider this a little; that God doth and why God doth leave his Church to extremities before he doth deliver it.

Take the reſolution of this in ſome propoſitions.

1. *'Tis indeed Gods uſual method to leave the Church to extremity before he doth command help.* You never heard of any eminent Deliverance of the Church

Church but was uſhered in by ſome amazing diſtreſs. The *Iſraelites* were not ſaved till they were put in between Sea, Hills and Forts, that their Deſtruction was inevitable unleſs Heaven relieved them. *Pharaoh* reſolves to have his will, and God reſolves to have his; but he lets him come with his whole Force and open mouth at the *Iſraelites* backs, and then makes the Waters his Sepulchre. *Conſtantine* the man-child in the Revelation was preceded by *Dioclesian* the ſharpeſt Perſecutor. When his People are at a loſs 'tis his uſual time to do his greateſt works for them. God had promiſed Chriſt many ages and yet no appearance of him; ſtill Promiſe after Promiſe, and no Performance, *Pſal.* 40.8. It was then [*lo I come*] yet many hundred years rowl'd away and no ſight of him yet. Captivity and Affliction and no Redeemer; but when the World was over-run with Idolatry, the *Jews* oppreſſed by the *Romans*, the Scepter departed from *Judah*, *Herod* an *Edomite*, and ſtranger King, and ſcarce any Faith left, then, then he comes. The World will be in

much the like caſe at his next coming, *Luke* 18.8. *When the Son of Man comes ſhall he find Faith in the Earth*, there ſhall be faintings, diſpondency, unbelief of his Promiſe, as though he had caſt off all care of his Churches concerns. 'Tis not meant of a Juſtifying Faith, but a Faith in that particular Promiſe of his coming. The Faith of the *Iſraelites* muſt needs begin to flag, when they ſaw their Males murdered by the *Egyptians*; could they believe the Propagation of the Seed of *Abraham*, when murder took off the Infants, and Labour and Age would in time, the old ones. Whilſt their Children were preſerved the Promiſe might eaſily be believed. But conſider this was but juſt before their deliverance; like a violent Criſis before Recovery. He doth then *Judge his People, and repent himſelf for his Servants, when he ſees their power is gone, and there is none ſhut up or left* *: He doth ſo for the wicked many times, when the affliction of Idolatrous *Iſrael* was bitter, when there was not any ſhut up, nor any left, nor any helper for *Iſrael*, then he ſaved them by the hand of

* Deut. 32. 36.

Jeroboam

Jeroboam the Son of *Joash* *. He doth so with private perſons; *Peter* might have been delivered by God's Power out of Priſon, when he was firſt ſent thither, but God thought it fitteſt for him to lie in Chaines, and free him but the night before his intended Execution *. *Lot* had his Goods rifled and carried away Captive before God ſtirred up *Abraham* to reſcue him. When the hand of the wicked lies heavieſt upon the heads of the Righteous and wrings the moſt mournful ſighs from them, when they are needy and the wicked ſecurely puffing at them, as though they had brought them to ſo low a condition as to blow them away with a blaſt, now ſaith God will I ariſe, *Pſal.* 12. 5. *For the oppreſſion of the poor, for the ſighing of the needy, now will I ariſe ſaith the Lord, I will ſet him at ſafety from him that puffeth at him.* *Now* this is the time I watched for as fitteſt for my own Glory and their ſafety. Then God diſappoints them when they ſeem to have got to the Goal with the Ball at their foot.

* 2 Kings 14. 26, 27.

* Acts 12 6, 7.

Secondly. God hereby doth glorify himſelf. He then diſcovers that there is nothing

thing too high for his power to check, nothing too ſubtil for his Wiſdom to diſappoint, nothing too low for his love to embrace. That is the ſeaſon wherein his Mercy will be moſt prized, his Power moſt admired, his Wiſdom moſt adored, and his Juſtice moſt cleared. God lets the concerns of his Church go backward that he may bring them on with more Glory to himſelf, and ſatisfaction to his Creature. God will divide the benefit and the honour between himſelf and the Creature: He will have the whole Glory and his creature ſhall have the ſenſible advantage. They ſhall enjoy *Salvation*, there is their benefit but not by *Sword* or *Bow* but *by the Lord their God* *. Saved they ſhould be, but in ſuch a way wherein the honour of God might moſt appear without any mixture of the Creature.

* Hoſ. 1.7.

1. *God glorifies his Power.* His eyes run to and fro to ſhew himſelf ſtrong. He will then pitch upon ſuch a ſeaſon when his ſtrength may appear moſt illuſtrious, and none elſe have any pretence to claim an equal ſtrength with him.

him. A time of extremity is the fitteſt opportunity for this. When his power cannot be clouded by any interpoſitions of the creature for challenging a ſhare in it. The greater the malice againſt the Church the weaker the Churches ability to help it ſelf, the more glorious is the power of God magnified in deliverance, little dangers are not ſo ſuitable for the triumph of an Infinite ſtrength. As God let Chriſt lye three dayes in the Grave, that his Reſurrection might be known to be the fruit of a Divine power, for the ſame end he lets his myſtical Body lye in the ſame condition. Had God brought *Iſrael* out of *Egypt* in the time of the Kings that were friends to them from a kindly remembrance of *Joſeph*, there had been no character of a Divine power, though there had been of a Divine truth apparent in the caſe; but he ſet apart that time for their deliverance when he was to conteſt with the mightieſt oppoſition from the whole Body of the *Egyptian* Nation, who had forgot *Joſeph* their great Benefactor. Had not the Diſciples been in a great Storm ready to be caſt

caſt away and Chriſt aſleep, till they were in extremity; they had not ſeen ſuch *.viſible marks of the extenſiveneſs of their Maſters power. When the hearts of the ſtrong men fainted, when the *Aſſyrians* would not hear the Embaſſadors of Peace, when they had broke their former Covenant, reſolved to invade the Land, when their Calamity and deſpair had arreſted all their hopes, *Now*, when all things are in ſuch a deplorable ſtate, *will I riſe ſaith the Lord, now will I be exalted, now will I lift up my ſelf.* God was not aſleep or unconcerned, but he ſate ſtill watching for ſuch a ſeaſon, Now, is three times repeated. The Pſalmiſt gives us a Record of this in his particular caſe. When the waters of his affliction were many, the Enemy ſtrong, and too ſtrong for him, their ſtrength edged with an intenſe hatred, then God appears to be his ſtay, and prevents them in the day of his Calamity, *Pſal* 18. 16, 17, 18. God lets his Enemies be too ſtrong for him, that he might appear his only ſtay, without any mixture of *Davids* ſtrength in the caſe.

* Iſa. 33. 7, 8, &c.

When

When the *Jews* thruſt Chriſt out of *Nazareth*, led him to the Brow of the Hill and were ready to caſt him down, then, and not till then he frees himſelf out of their hands, and diſappoints the effects of their rage. As Chriſt dealt thus for himſelf, ſo he deals for his Church in all Ages.

2. *God Glorifies his Wiſdom. His eyes run to and fro throughout the whole Earth to ſhew himſelf ſtrong*; 'tis not a bare ſtrength that God would ſhew, or ſuch a Power which we call in man a bruitiſh valor, without wit or skill; but to ſhew his ſtrength with his wiſdom, when all his other Attributes may be glorified with that of his Power. When all worldly helps are departed, we can as little aſcribe our ſecurity to our own wiſdom and induſtry as to our own ſtrength and power. The Phyſitians skill is beſt evidenced in maſtering a deſperate Diſeaſe. He will bring the Councils of the Heathen to nought*. He will let them counſel, he will let them deviſe and carry on their Councils near to Execution, that he may ſhew that as the ſtrength of Hell is no match for his Power,

* Pſal. 33. 10.

Power, ſo the craft of Satan is no mate for his Wiſdom. But he raiſes the Trophies of his Wiſdom upon the ſubtle deviſes of his Enemies.

3. *God Glorifies his Care and Compaſſion.* When his people are neareſt cruſhing, God is neareſt preſerving. Gods Mercy is greateſt when his Saints Miſery is deepeſt, when *Sion* is as an outcaſt it ſhall be taken into Gods protection, *Jer.* 30. 16, 17. *I will heal thee of thy Wounds becauſe they called thee an Out-caſt, ſaying this is* Sion *whom no man ſeeks after.* When none ſtood up to plead for her, when her Lovers ſhe depended on had forgotten and forſaken her, when they thought her caſt out of the care of any creature, the Creator would take her up. When the ruine was inevitable as to man, their preſervation was moſt regarded by God. Had God ſtopped *Pharaoh* at his firſt March by raiſing ſome Mutiny in his Army, his mercy to his people as well as his power againſt his Enemies had not been ſo conſpicuous. The more deſperate things are, the fitter ſubject for the advancement of Gods kindneſs. Had God conducted

ducted the *Iſraelites* through a rich and fruitful Country, it would have obſcured the glory of his care of them, which was more ſignal in directing them through a Barren Deſert, crowded with fiery Serpents, without Bread, to nouriſh them or Water to cool them, wherein he manifeſted himſelf to be both their Caterer and Phyſitian. *Moſes* was never more peculiarly under Gods protection, no not when he had the whole Guard of *Iſrael* about him in the Wilderneſs, than when his Mother had expoſed him to the River forlorn, in a pitched Ark, and forſaken by his Siſter, who ſtood aloof off to ſee how Providence would conduct him. When *Laban* was poſſeſſed with Fury againſt *Jacob*, God countermands it and iſſues out his own order to him, how he ſhould behave himſelf towards his Son *. God times his kindneſs, ſo that it may appear to be nothing elſe but Grace, Grace with a Witneſs; that his people may be able to underſtand the very particularities of it, *Iſa.* 30. 18. *therefore will the Lord wait that he may be gracious unto you*: He leaves them therefore for a while to the

* Gen. 31. 24, 29.

the will of their enemies, verſe 17. *At the rebuke of five ſhall you flee till you be left as a Beacon upon the top of a Mountain and as an Enſign upon a Hill:* Never is Salvation ſweeter, and Mercy better reliſht then when it ſnatcheth us out of the teeth of danger. God would have his mercy valued, and 'tis fit it ſhould. And when is a Calm more grateful than after the bittereſt Storm attended with the higheſt deſpair? Gods mercy in ſparing *Iſaack* after the knife was at his throat was more welcome and more delitious both to Father and Son, than if God had revealed his intent to *Abraham* in the three days Journey to the Mount *Moriah*. But God ſuſpending his Soul in bitterneſs all that time prepared his heart for the valuation of that mercy. When humane help forſaketh us God moſt embraceth us, *Pſal.* 27.10. *When my Father and Mother forſake me then the Lord will take me up.*

4. *God glorifies his Righteounſeſs and Juſtice.* There is a meaſure of wickedneſs God ſtays for, which will be an obiect of his Juſtice without exception. When the meaſure of a peoples Covetouſneſs

touſneſs is come then their end is come, and God will fill them with men as with Caterpillers, and they ſhall lift up a ſhout againſt them *. Hereby God clears the Juſtice of his proceedings, that he exerciſed Patience ſo long; that things were come to that paſs, that either his People or his Enemies muſt be deſtroyed. As the caſe was with the *Iſraelites*, had not God marvellouſly appeared, every man of them had been cut off or reduced to Slavery. The Dye was caſt, either the *Egyptians* or the *Iſraelites* muſt be defeated: either God muſt appear for his Church, or none would be left in the World to profeſs him. In ſuch a caſe the Juſtice of God is more unexceptionable: No man has any ſemblance for complaining of him. For he ſtruck not till the ſafety of his Adverſaries was inconſiſtent with his own Honour and Intereſt in the World. When men come to ſuch a height, as to ſlight, and reſolve to break the laws of God, then is the time for the Honour of his Righteouſneſs in his own inſtitutions, to vex them in his ſore diſpleaſure, *Pſal.* 2. 3, 5. *Then*

* Jer. 51. 13, 14.

ſhall he ſpeak to them in his wrath and vex them, &c. When? When they reſolve to *caſt away his bands and cords from them, ver.* 2. He is forced to riſe then, when men make void his Law, and tread down the Honour of it: When they would not have God to have a ſtanding Law in the World, or a people to profeſs him, *Pſal.* 119. 126. *'Tis time for thee Lord to work, for they have made void thy Law.* When the Grapes of Wickedneſs are thus fully ripe, then is Gods time for the honour of his Juſtice to caſt them into the Wine-preſs of his Wrath *. This is Gods ſet time when he may glorify without any exception, his Juſtice in puniſhing his enemies ſins, his Wiſdom in defeating his enemies Plots, his power in deſtroying his enemies ſtrength, and his mercy in relieving his Peoples wants.

* Rev. 14. 19. 20.

Thirdly, Such extremities and deliverance in them are moſt advantagious for his People.

1. *It being a ſeaſon to improve and know their Intereſt.* Men do not uſually ſeek to God, or at leaſt ſo earneſtly as when they are in diſtreſs; the time of the tempeſt was

was the time of the Disciples praying to Christ: The *Israelites*, you scarce find them calling upon God but in times of danger and distress: hereby God doth incourage and give an argument for Prayer. The Psalmist useth the extremity of the Church often as an Argument to move God to pity, *Psal.* 123. 3. *Have mercy upon us O Lord, have mercy upon us, for we are exceedingly filled with contempt.* We are glutted with contempt, as low as low can be, so *Psal.* 44. 23, 24. *Awake, why sleepest thou, O Lord, arise cast us not off for ever, our soul is bowed to the dust.* That is the most successful time for Prayer which is the time of the stirring of Gods Bowels. He hath been a *strength to the Poor, a strength to the Needy in his Distress, a refuge from the Storm, a shadow from the heat, when the blast of the terrible ones is as a Storm against the Wall**. They in such a time find how considerable their interest is with God, when upon their Prayer they shall find relief suitable to every kind of danger they are in: The Spirit of Prayer upon the Church is but the Presage of their Adversaries

* Isa. 25. 4

ſaries ruin. When God ſeeks to deſtroy the Nations that come againſt *Hieruſalem*, he will pour upon the Inhabitants of it, a ſpirit of Grace and of Supplication, *Zach.* 12. 9. *And in that day I will ſeek to deſtroy all the Nations that come againſt Jeruſalem, and I will pour upon the houſe of* David *and the Inhabitants of Jeruſalem the Spirit of Grace and of Supplication.* This time of extremity when all their hands fail, ſhould edge the Churches Prayers. Our great Interceſſor ſeems in this caſe to ſet us a pattern, *Zech.* 1. 12. *O Lord of Hoſts how long wilt thou not have mercy upon Jeruſalem?* [אַתָּה ſingle by it ſelf not in an affix.] When all the Earth ſits ſtill and is at reſt, unconcerned in the affairs of thy Church, if thou wilt not have mercy on them in this ſtrait who ſhall relieve them? none elſe have any mind to it, then iſſue out comfortable words to the Angel from the mouth of God. This is; an advantage of extremity, it ſets Chriſt a pleading and the Church on praying.

2. *As a ſeaſon for acting Faith at preſent, and an encouragement of relyance upon*

upon him in future ſtraights. As a ſeaſon for acting Faith at preſent. Our Saviour lets *Lazarus* dye and ſtink in the Grave, before he raiſed him, that he might both confirm Faith in his Diſciples hearts, and ſettle it in the hearts of ſome of the *Jews* *. *I am glad for your ſakes that I was not there, to the intent that ye may believe.* What, let *Lazarus* die, one that he loved, one ſo ſtrongly pleaded for by two Siſters that he loved too, and ſollicited upon his friendſhip to relieve him *v.* 3. *Behold he whom thou loveſt is ſick,* and our Saviour glad he was not there to prevent it, yes, not glad of *Lazarus* his extremity, nor of the Churches; But of the opportunity to give them greater ground of Faith and encouragement to truſt him. The Churches Faith is Gods Glory: He that hath many things to truſt to is in ſuſpence which he ſhould take hold of: But when there is but one left, with what greedineſs will he claſp about that. God cuts down worldly props, that we might make him our ſtay. How will the Church in extremity recollect all the deliverances of it in former ages,

* John 11 15, 45.

and put them up in pleas to God, for a renewal of his wonted kindneſs and new ſucceſſions of deliverance, whereby God gets the glory of his former work, and his Church the preſent comfort in renewing fiducial acts upon him. How doth *Jehoſaphat* put God in mind of his gracious aſſiſtance acted ſome ages before, when he was in a ſtraight, by the Invaſion of a powerful Army, 2 *Chron.* 20. 7. *Art not thou our God that didſt drive out the Inhabitants of this Land before thy people* Iſrael, *v.* 12. *We know not what to do, but our eyes are upon thee*: Never are the Churches eyes ſo fixed upon God; never Gods eyes ſo fixed upon the Church as in times of their diſtreſs. Then there is a ſweet Communion with, and recounting of all their former friendſhips: The Church then throws it ſelf wholly upon God: Its proſperity is but like a troubled Sea, its diſtreſs is the time of its reſt. So *Aſa*, when aſſaulted by a million of men under *Zerah* the *Ethiopian*, how doth he throw himſelf and the whole weight of his concerns upon the hands of God, and makes his

his Cauſe Gods, 2 *Chron.* 14. 11. *Help us O Lord our God for we reſt on thee, oh Lord, thou art our God, let not man prevail againſt thee.* And there is an encouragement alſo in the deliverance for future Faith. It gives a ground for future Faith from the riches of the preſent experience. In ſuch diſtreſſes there is the higheſt experience of God, and hope is the fruit of experience; How apt are we to believe God in other ſtraits when we have had aſſiſtance (like they that dream'd) come unexpectedly upon us. God overthrew *Pharaoh's* Hoſt in the red Sea, when they were upon the heels of the affrighted *Iſraelites* and ready to cruſh them, but God gave them *to be meat to the people inhabiting the Wilderneſs* *, as a ſtanding excellent diſh to feed their hopes for all future deliverances upon their truſt in God. And indeed that deliverance was an earneſt of their perpetual ſecurity, by ſpecial Providence in any ſucceeding trouble. And God often gives them a particular charge to remember that deliverance, with a practical remembrance to ſtill their Fear, and ſupport their

* Pſal. 74. 14.

Faith, *Deut.* 7. 18. *Thou ſhalt not be affraid of them, but ſhalt well remember what the Lord thy God did unto* Pharaoh *and to all the* Egyptians. He would have them remember it as a Covenant-mercy, *what the Lord thy God did,* thy God in Covenant, not what the Lord did barely by an arm of Power, but what he did by a vaſtneſs of affection, and as a God of truth and firmneſs in his Covenant.

3. *In fitting them by the extremity for a holy reception of the Mercy intended.*

God keeps up the diſtreſs of his Church to expel ſelf-confidence. Truſt in earthly things are the great checks of Gods Kindneſs. We hardly forſake this temper till we are forſaken by all thoſe things we confide in. Times of extremity make us more humble, and humility like the Plow, fits us for the ſeed of mercy. The Gardners digging up the clods is but to prepare the earth for the receiving and nouriſhing ſome excellent Plants he intends to put into its Womb. There is a certain ſet time for Gods great actions. He lets the powers of darkneſs have their hour and God will

will take his hour, *Pſal.* 102.13. *Thou ſhalt ariſe and have mercy upon* Sion, *for the time to favour her, yea the ſet time is come.* He hath a ſet time for the diſcovery of his mercy and he will not ſtay a jot beyond it. What is this time? *v.* 9, *&c.* When they *eat aſhes like Bread and mingle their drink with weeping.* When they are moſt humbled; and when the ſervants of God have moſt affection to the Church. When their humble and ardent affections are ſtrong even to the ruine and rubbiſh of it; when they have a mighty deſire and longing for the reparation of it, as the *Jews* in Captivity had for the very duſt of the Temple, *ver.* 14. *For thy Servants take pleaſure in her Stones, and favour the duſt thereof. For,* there notes it to be a reaſon why the ſet time was judged by them to be come. That is Gods ſet time when the Church is moſt believing, moſt humble, moſt affectionate to Gods intereſt in it and moſt ſincere. Without Faith we are not fit to deſire mercy; without humility we are not fit to receive it, , without affection we are not fit to value it, without ſincerity we are

not

not fit to improve it. Times of extremity contribute to the growth and exerciſe of thoſe qualifications.

4. *In ſecuring them againſt future Streights.* For Gods diſappointing Enemies when they think themſelves ſure of all, is the higheſt diſcouragement to them and thoſe of the like temper to renew the like attempts; but if they do, it is an evidence they ſhall meet with the like ſucceſs; 'Tis the higheſt vexation to ſee their projects diverted, when they have lighted their match and are ready to give fire. Men may better take notice how God loves his people, when he apprehends their adverſaries in the very Pinnacle of their Pride, and flings them down from the Mount of their hopes. It doth not only daſh the preſent deſigns, but diſhearten future attempts. The *Egyptians* after their overthrow at the red Sea never attempted to diſturb them in their journey in the Wilderneſs. It was a Bridle to all their enemies, except *Amaleck*, upon whoſe Country they travelled in the Wilderneſs, when it was the intereſt of State in all thoſe Nations to rout that

that ſwarm of People that muſt have ſome Seat to dwell in; and every Nation might juſtly fear to be diſpoſſeſſed by them; yet we read of no League among thoſe Nations bordering upon the Wilderneſs, ſuch a terror did God ſtrike into them by that relief he gave his People in their extremity at the red Sea; whereby he provided for their future ſecurity in their whole Journey. It was this melted the hearts of the *Gibeonites* one of the Nations of *Canaan*, and brought them to a ſubmiſſion to *Joſhua* as the ſentiment of all their Neighbors, *Joſh.* 9.9. *We are come becauſe of the name of the Lord thy God, for we have heard the fame of him and all that he did in Egypt.* And for this and other reaſons it may be, that the times before the Churches laſt deliverance ſhall be ſharper than any before; which our Saviour intimates, *Mat.* 24.21. *For then there ſhall be great tribulation, ſuch as was not ſince the beginning of the World, no nor ever ſhall be.* In Diſcourſing his Diſciples of the troubles at the deſtruction of *Jeruſalem*, which was a type of the trouble preceding

ding the end of the World, he adds a diſcourſe of what ſhall be at the end of the World, in the laſt attempt of the enemies of the Church, for *ver.* 29. he ſaith *immediately after the tribulation of thoſe days*, he ſpeaks of his coming in the Clouds of Heaven with great power and glory. And alſo in the Revelation, *Rev.* 16. 18. *And there was a great Earthquake, ſuch as was not ſince men were upon the Earth, ſo mighty an Earthquake and ſo great.* This perhaps at the pouring out of the ſeventh Vial may concern the Chriſtian Church as well as the Anti-Chriſtian Party. But the reaſon why it may be ſharper juſt before that laſt deliverance than it was in former ages, may be becauſe it is the laſt effort the enemy ſhall make; the laſt demonſtration of Gods power and wiſdom for and care of his Church, and of Juſtice upon his enemies in ſuch caſes. The laſt ſeaſon for their multiplying their cries, and acting their Faith for ſuch a concern.

3. *Uſe* of *Exhortation.* If it be ſo, that the Providence of God is chiefly deſigned for the good of the Church.

Firſt,

Firſt, Fear not the Enemies of the Church. 'Tis a wrong to God. Fear of Man is always attended with a forgetfulneſs of God, *Iſa.* 51. 12, 13. *I, even I am he that comforteth you, who art thou that art affraid of a man that ſhall dye, and of the Son of Man that ſhall be made as Graſs, and forgetteſt the Lord thy maker, who hath ſtretched forth the Heavens, &c.* 'Tis to value the power of Graſs above the power of the Creator, as though that had more ability to hurt than God to help. As if men were as ſtrong as Mountains, and God as weak as a Bul-ruſh. 'Tis a wrong to his truth; hath he not *comforted* you in his Promiſe? What Creature ſhould then deject you? 'Tis a wrong to his Mercy; Is he not the Lord thy maker? *Calvin* refers this to Regeneration and not Creation. Hath he not renewed you by his Spirit, and will he not protect you by his ſtrength? and that you may not queſtion his power, look up to the Heavens which he hath ſtretched out, and the foundations of the Earth which he hath laid: And is that Arm which hath done ſuch mighty works

works too weak to defend that work which is choicer in his eye than either the extended Heaven or the eſtabliſhed Earth. We vilifie God and defile his Glory, when our fear of mans power ſtifles our Faith in God, *Iſa.* 8.12,13. *Neither fear you their fear, nor be affraid, Sanctifie the Lord of Hoſts himſelf, and let him be your Fear.* Let the wicked fear the *Aſſyrians* and engage in confederacies againſt them, but let your eyes be lifted up to me and my Providence. God will either turn away the mouth of the Canon from the Church, or arm it againſt the ſhot; Either preſerve it from a danger, protect it in it or ſanctifie it to the Church, and who need fear a Sword in a Fathers hand?

1. *Will you fear man who have a God to ſecure you?* The Church belongs to God, not to man as a juſt propriety. *Iſa.* 43. 1. *Fear not for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by my name, thou art mine, when thou paſſeſt through the waters I will be with thee, &c. Thou art mine,* not mans. Thou art mine, I am thine. I will be with thee as thine, I will ſecure thee as mine. Is my Creating

ting, is my forming, is my redeeming thee to no purpoſe? I will not ſecure you from trouble; but ſurely my redemption of you, the propriety I have in you ſhould ſecure you from fears in thoſe troubles. None ſhall hurt you whilſt I have power to defend you. *God with us* if well conſidered and believed is ſufficient to ſtill thoſe fears which have the greateſt outward objects for their encouragement, *Pſal.* 27. 1. *The Lord is the ſtrength of my life, of whom ſhall I be afraid.* If God be our ſtrength to ſupport us, why ſhould the weakneſs of duſt and aſhes ſcare us? Alliance to great men and Protection of Princes, prop up mens hearts againſt the fears of others; and ſhall allyance to God be of a weaker efficacy? A * Heathen could ſo argue that knew nothing of Redemption. Let the Counſels of Enemies be crafty *, yet they conſult againſt Gods hidden ones, hidden by God whilſt Plotted againſt by men: who would fear the ſtratagems of men, whilſt protected in an impregnable Tower? God hides when men are ready to ſeize the Prey. How did the Angel protect a ſincere, trembling

* *Arnob.* in Epiſt. lib. 1. c. 9.

Pſal. 83. 3.

trembling *Lot* againſt the invaſion of a whole City, and ſecured his perſon whilſt he blinded his enemies eyes that they could not find the door. Inſtruments cannot deſign more malitiouſly than Chriſt watches over them affectionately. Chriſt hath his Eye to ſee your works and danger where Satan hath his Throne. Rev. 2.13.

2. *Will you fear man who have a God to watch over their motions?* What Counſels can prevail where God intends to over-rule their reſolves? There is no place ſo cloſe as to keep private reſolutions from his knowledge. This was the thought of thoſe States-men againſt whom the Prophet *Iſaiah* thunders, *Iſa.* 29. 15, 16. *Wo unto them that ſeek deep to hide their counſel from the Lord, and their works are in the dark; ſurely your turning of things upſide down ſhall be eſteemed as the Potters Clay.* Their Counſels were as well known to him as the Potters Clay is to the Potter, which he can either frame into a veſſel or fling away into the Maſs from whence he took it. God hath not diſpoyled himſelf of his Government; nor will devolve his right upon

upon any men to diſpoſe of his concerns. When men think to act ſo ſecretly as though they framed themſelves, as though Gods eye were not upon them; He will watch and trace all their Motions and make them inſignificant to their purpoſes. Satan himſelf, the ſlyeſt and ſubtileſt agent is too open to God to hide his Councils from him. Never fear man till the whole combined Pollicies of Hell can controul the reſolves of Heaven. Till God wants omniſcience to dive into their ſecrets, skill to defeat their Councils, and an arm to abate their power.

3. *Will you fear Men or Devils who have a God to reſtrain them?*

The great Dragon and General of the ſerpents Seed is under a binding power, who can bind him not only a thouſand years but a thouſand Ages *. Have his Seed more force to reſiſt Almightineſs than their Captain? The Prophet ſpeaking of the *Aſſyrians* threatning *Jeruſalem*, and the confuſion in ſome Cities for fear of them, yet, ſaith he, he ſhall remain at *Nob*, a City of the *Levites* not far from *Jeruſalem*;

* Rev. 20. 2.

ruſalem; where he might have a full Proſpect of the City. He ſhall but ſhake his hand, he ſhall not gripe it in his Talons; He ſhall ſhew his teeth, but not bite, ſnarle but not worry, *Iſa.* 10. 32. God will let out ſo much of the enemies wrath as may anſwer his gracious ends to the Church in purging of them, but the remainder of Wrath, which remains in their hearts for the Churches Deſtruction, he will re-
* Pſal. 76. 9, 10. ſtrain. * As a Phyſitian weighs out ſo much as may curb the Diſeaſe, not kill the Patient. The Chain of Providence controuls the Power of Satan when it doth not change his deſires. The *Egyptians* Will againſt the *Iſraelites* was ſtrong but his power was weak. Might and Power is only in the hand of God, who Reigns over all, 1 *Chron.* 29. 12. And God will exert ſo much of Power to bridle the inclinations of Nature in the wicked for the good of his people. He will give them ſo much line as may ſerve his holy purpoſes, but not ſo much as ſhall prejudice the Churches ſtanding. A Staff is not capable of giving a ſmart blow without the force of the

the hand that holds it. Wicked men are no more than a ſtaff in Gods hand, *Pſal.* 10. 5. *The Rod of my Anger, the Staff in their hand is my Indignation*; he can either ſtrike with it or break it in pieces. The Staff is ſtill in the hand of God, and can do no more than what his merciful Arm moves it to, as he can reſtrain it ſo he can divert it. What ſhould we fear thoſe whoſe hearts are in Gods hands, whoſe enmity is under Gods reſtraint, who can change their fury into favour, or at leaſt bridle it as he doth the Waves of the Sea? No Enemies ſhot can exceed Gods Commiſſion. God often laughs when men Plot, and diſapoints when they begin to act. Sometimes he makes them act contrary to their intentions. *Balaam* comes to curſe the People and God turns his tongue to bleſs them, which if guided by his own heart would have poured out execrations upon them *. God puts the words into his mouth but not in his heart, *verſe* 5. and makes him bleſs that which his heart hates.

* Numb. 23. 7, 8.

4. *Will you fear them who have a God to ruin them?* Though the Beaſt in

the *Revelations* hath ſeven heads, a reaching Wiſdom, and ten horns, a mighty power *, (both the numbers of ſeven, and ten, being numbers of perfection in Scripture) yet with all his Wiſdom and Strength he ſhall tumble down to Deſtruction, they can no more reſiſt Gods power than bluſtring Winds or raging Waves can croſs his Will. When the enemies of the Church are in Combination, like Thorns full of prickles *folded together*, then ſhall they *be conſumed like Stubble that is dry*. Nahum 1. 10. God loves to defeat Pride, *Exod.* 18. 11. *In the thing wherein they dealt proudly, he was above them.* God waits but the time of their ſwelling to make them burſt. *Abſalom* kills his Brother, withdraws the people from their obedience to the King, ſtirs them up to revolt, enters *Jeruſalem* in his Fathers abſence, polutes his Concubines, engages in deſigns againſt his life, raiſeth an Army againſt him, who would not ſay *David* was in extremity, and *Abſolom* alone proſpering in his deſigns? but when *Abſalom* comes to open force God ariſes,

* Rev. 17. 3.

ſes, an Oak catches him, his Mule forſakes him and *Joab* diſpatches him. *Senacherib* had proſpered in his Conqueſt of *Judea*, taken many ſtrong Towns, laid ſiege to *Jeruſalem*, ſollicits the People to revolt, blaſphemes the God of Heaven, and then an Angel comes and makes a dreadful ſlaughter in a night, and he returning to his own Country is killed by his own Sons *. Gods Arrows ſhall never miſs their mark, and he hath more than one to ſtrike into the hearts of his enemies, *Pſal.* 18. 14. *He ſent out his Arrows and ſcattered them.* What reaſon then to fear even multitudes, who can never be too ſtrong for that God who gave them that little ſtrength they have.

* 2 Kings 19. 7, 35, 36, 37.

Secondly, The ſecond Duty to which we are exhorted. If all Gods Providences tend to the good of his Church and People.

2. *Then cenſure not God in his dark Providences.* As we are often too haſty, in our deſires for mercy, and are not content to ſtay Gods Time, ſo we are too haſty in making conſtructions of Providence, and will not ſtay Gods lei-

ſure of informing us. When God ſeems at the beginning of every Providence to ſpeak the ſame language as Chriſt did to *Peter* in waſhing his feet, *John* 13. 7. *What I do thou knoweſt not now, but thou ſhalt know hereafter*: The Inſtruments are viſible, the action ſenſible, but the inward meaning ſtill lies obſcured from our view. We are too ſhort ſighted to apprehend and judge of Gods Works: Man cannot underſtand his own way *; much leſs the ways of an infinite God. Gods Judgments are a great deep * we may ſooner fathom the Deepeſt part in the Sea, underſtand all the turnings of thoſe ſubterranean paſſages, lave out the Ocean with a ſpoon, or ſuck in, into our Bellys that great maſs of waters, than underſtand the ways of God with our ſhallow brains. He makes darkneſs his Pavilion: He is ſometimes very obſcure in his ways. Neither the greatneſs of his Means nor the wiſdom of his workings can be fully apprehended by men. We have ſence to feel the effects, but not heads to underſtand the reaſons and methods of the Divine Government.

* Prov. 20. 24.

* Pſal. 36. 6.

Eccleſ.

*Eccleſ.*3.11. *No man can find out the work that God makes from the beginning to the end.* Though a man may ſee the beginning of Gods works, yet is he able to walk underſtandingly along with Divine Wiſdom in every ſtep it takes? will he not loſe the tract often before it comes to an end? 'Tis not the face but the back-parts of Providence which we behold, why then ſhould we uſurp an authority beyond our ability, and make our ſelves Gods Judges, as if infinite Wiſdom and Power were bounded within the narrow compaſs of our purblind Reaſons: His ways are beyond our tracing, and his Councils too high for our ſhort meaſures. Since therefore God ſatisfies the Righteouſneſs of his own Will, let us ſubmit our curioſity to his Wiſdom, and forbear our Cenſures of that exact righteouſneſs and ſuperlative wiſdom which we cannot comprehend.

1. Therefore, *Firſt fix this in your minds, that God is Righteous, Wiſe and Good in every thing.* Good, therefore nothing can be hurtful to his People: Righteous, therefore nothing Unjuſt. Wiſe

therefore nothing in vain. Our injurious thoughts of him make us ſo uncharitable towards him, and greater Cenſurers of his righteous ways, then we are of mens wicked actions. Clouds and Darkneſs are about him: our eye cannot pierce through his darkneſs, or ſee the frame of his counſels, yet let theſe Principles be kept as the Center, that *Righteouſneſs and Judgment are the Habitation of his Throne* *. He is righteous in his darkneſs, wiſe in his cloudineſs; though his Judgments are unſearchable to us and his ways paſt finding out, by our moſt induſtrious inquiſitions; and a depth of knowledge & wisdom, there is in them too deep for us to meaſure *. God was always Righteous, Wiſe, and Good, he is the ſame ſtill: Though the motions of the Planets be contrary, yet the Sphere where they are fixed, the natures wherewith they were created are the ſame ſtill. Though the Providences of God have various motions, yet the Spring of his Counſel, the Rule of his Goodneſs, the Eye of his Wiſdom, the Arm of his Power are not altered: He acts by the ſame Rule, diſpoſeth

* Pſal. 97. 2.

* Rom. 9. 33.

ſeth by the ſame Wiſdom, orders according to the ſame Righteouſneſs; he is unchangeable in the midſt of the changeable effects of Providence. The Sun is the ſame body, which admits of no inward alteration, keeps exactly its own motion, though its appearances are ſometimes ruddy, ſometimes clear, its heat ſometimes more faint, at another time more ſcorching, its diſtance ſometimes nearer ſometimes farther off. He muſt be very ignorant that thinks the objects upon which we look through a Priſme or Trigonal Glaſs change their colours as often as they are repreſented ſo, in the various turnings of the Glaſs. You ſee the undulations and wavings of a Chain which hangs perpendicularly, one part moves this way and another that way, but the hand that holds it, or the beam to which it is faſtned is firm and ſteddy.

2. *Diſtinguiſh between preparations to the main work and the perfection of the work*; between the motions of Gods eyes and the diſcovery of his ſtrength, his eyes move before his power. The neglect of this was the cauſe of the *Iſraelites* uncharitable Cenſures of the kindneſs of

of God: they interpret Gods reducing them into the Straits near the red Sea, a design for their destruction, which was but the preparation for their compleat deliverance, in a way most glorious to God and most comfortable and advantagious to themselves.

Morn. de verit. Rel. Christian. *cap.* 12. p. 210. 211.

He that knows not the use of the Grape would foolishly censure a man who should fling them into a Wine-press and squeeze them into mash, which is but a preparation of them to afford that generous liquor which was the end of their growth. God treads his Grapes in a Wine-press to draw from thence a delicate Wine and preserve the juyce for his own use, which would else wither upon the stalk and dry up to nothing. We judge not the Husbandman angry with his ground for tearing it with his Plow, nor censure an Artificer for hewing his Stones or beating his Iron, but expect patiently the issue of the design. Why should we not pay the same respect to God which we do to men in their Arts; since we are less capable of being Judges of his incomprehensible Wisdom than of the skill

skill of our fellow Creatures. God in his croſs Providences prepares the Church for fruitfulneſs whilſt he Plows it. He may ſeem to be digging up the Bowels of the Church, while he is only preparing to lay the foundation in *Sion* for the raiſing a noble ſtructure, and in what ſhape ſoever he appears in his preparations, he will in his perfection of it appear in glory, *Pſal.* 102. 16. *When the Lord ſhall build up Sion he ſhall appear in Glory*, and evidence that he was reſtoring, whilſt we thought him deſtroying; and healing whilſt we thought him wounding. As God hath ſetled a gradual Progreſs in his works of Creation, ſo by degrees he brings his everlaſting Counſels to perfection. The ſeaſons of the year are not jumbled together but orderly ſucceed one another,& the coldneſs of the Winter is but a preparation for a ſeaſonable Spring and a Summer Harveſt. We do not unrighteouſly accuſe God of diſorder in his common works, why ſhould we do it in his ſpecial works of Providence? Do we diſparage the Muſitians skill for the jarring and unintelligible touches in the tuning

the

Inſtrument, but rather wait for the Leſſon he intends to play: If we ſtay for Godsfuller Touches of this great Inſtrument of the World in the way of his Providence it will like *Davids* Harp, chaſe away that evil Spirit from us which is now too apt to cenſure him.

3. *Fix not your eye only upon the ſenſible operations of Providence, but the ultimate end.* As in a Watch the various wheels have different motions, yet all ſubſervient to one end, to tell the true hour of the day and the motion of the Sun; ſo are all the Providences of God. Should any have been preſerved in the Deluge upon ſome high Mountain, who had not known the deſign of the Ark, and had ſeen it floating upon ſuch a Maſs of Waters, he would have judged the People in it in a deplorable condition, and have concluded that it would have broke againſt a Mountain or been overturned by the Waves, yet that was *Noah*'s preſervative. Had any of us been with Chriſt & acknowledged him the Saviour of the World, and yet ſeen him Crucified in ſuch a manner by men; and judged only by that, what

wiſe

wiſe and what juſt conſtructions ſhould we have made of that Providence? much the ſame as ſome of his Diſciples did, *Luke* 24. 21. *We truſted that it had been he which ſhould have redeemed* Iſrael. But the whole deſign is ſpoiled, we were fools and he an Impoſtor. Yet this which ſeemed to be the ruine of Redemption, was the neceſſary high way to it by Gods conſtitution. No other way was it to be procured, *ver.* 26. *Ought not Chriſt to have ſuffered theſe things and to have entred into his Glory.* His entrance into Glory to perfect our Salvation was the end of the ſenſible ſuffering, wherein he laid the foundation; as they charge Chriſt with impoſture, not conſidering the end, ſo do we God with unrighteouſneſs, when we conſider not his aim. The end both beautifies and crowns the work; The remarks of Gods Glory in the Creation are better drawn from the ends of the Creatures and their joynt ſubſerviency to them, than from any one ſingle piece of the Creation. We muſt not only conſider the preſent end but the remote end, becauſe God in his Providence

dence towards his Church hath his end for after times. God acts for ends at a great distance from us, which may not be compleated till we are dead and rotten. How can we judge of that which respects a thing so remote from us unless we view it in that Relation? Gods aims in former Providences were things to come, his aims in present Providences are things to come. As the matter of the Churches Prayers so the objects of Gods Providences are things to come, *Isa.* 45. 11. *Ask me of things to come concerning my Sons.* The matter of their Prayers then were, that God would order all things for the coming of the *Messiah.* The matter of the Churches Prayer now is that God would order all things for the perfecting the Messiah in his mystical Body. The whole frame of Providence is for one intire design. 'Tis one intire Book with seven Seals *. Thebeginning of a Book as well as the middle hath relation to the end. The design of Gods Book of Providence isbut one in all the seven Seals and periods of time.

* Rev. 5. 1.

4. *Consider not only one single act of Providence, but the whole Scheme to make a conclusion.*

concluſion. The motions of his eyes are various, but all ends in diſcoveries of his ſtrength. Men do not argue from one ſingle propoſition, but draw the concluſion from ſeveral propoſitions knit together. 'Tis by ſuch a Spiritual Logick we are to make our concluſions from the ways of Providence; as in the reading Scripture, if we take not the whole Period, we may make not only non-ſenſe, but Blaſphemy, as in that of the Pſalmiſt, *Thou art not a God that hath pleaſure in unrighteouſneſs.* If a man ſhould read only, *thou art not a God* and make a full ſtop there it would be Blaſphemy; but reading the whole verſe it is excellent ſence, and an honourable declaration of Gods holineſs. Such Errors will be committed in reading the Books of Providence, if we fix our eyes only in one place and make a full ſtop where God hath not made any. We judge not of a Picture by the firſt draught, but the laſt lines; not by one ſhadow or colour, but by the whole compoſure. The Wiſdom of God is beſt judged of by the view of the harmony of Providence. The ſingle threads of Providence

Burges of Juſtification, part 2. Serm. 2. p. 12.

dence may ſeem very weak or knotty and uneven, and ſeem to adminiſter juſt occaſion of Cenſure; but will it not as much raiſe the admiration to ſee them all woven into a curious piece of branched work. Conſider therefore Gods ways of working, but fully judge nothing, till the concluſion, for that is to judge before the time. Judge not then of Providence at the firſt appearance, God may ſo loſe the glory of his work and you the comfort.

Thirdly. The third Duty. *Inquire into Providence and interpret all publick Providences by this Rule.* We muſt ſearch into it, though we are not able to find out all the reaſons of it. What can be a braver ſtudy than that which is the object of Gods eternal counſel. We are conformed to God in our Wills when we have the ſame ends in our motions, and we are conformed to God in our underſtandings when we have the ſame object of our thoughts; ſome Providences have their interpretation written in their foreheads we may run and read, ſuch as his ſignal Judgments in the World; which expreſs the very

ſin

ſin for which they are inflicted; others are wrapt up in a harder ſhell and more covers, and therefore more labour to reach the kernel; ſome are too high for our knowledge, none for our enquiry. 'Tis our duty to ſeek after God, though we can never arrive to a perfect knowledge of him. *Job* 11.7. *Canſt thou by ſearching find out God; canſt thou find out the Almighty unto Perfection?* He prohibits not the ſearching, though he aſſerts the impoſſibility of finding him out to perfection. What hath God given us faculties for but to ſearch after him, and we muſt not do it to ſatisfie our curioſity but to encreaſe our knowledge, and conſequently our admiration of his wiſe and powerful care. Diligence muſt be uſed too. Our firſt thoughts about things of concernment, are uſually confuſed; ſo are our firſt ſights of Providence. Providence is a great deep, deep things are not ſeen without ſtooping down. We muſt παρακύπτειν as the Angels do when they ſearch into the things of the Goſpel *. But let this aim of God at the good of his Church be the rule of your inter-

* 1 Pet. 1. 12.

pretation. Without this Compaſs to ſteer our judgments by, we may both loſe and rack our ſelves in the Wilderneſs of Providence, and fortify our natural Atheiſm and Ignorance inſtead of our Faith. I muſt confeſs the ſtudy of Providence is in ſome reſpect more difficult than in the former Ages of the World, becauſe God ſeems to manage things in the Church more by his Wiſdom than Power, which is not ſo intelligible by man as the ſenſible effects of his ſtrength. That attribute he manifeſted moſt in Miraculous ways, and the viſible Miniſtry of Angels as we read in Scripture ſtories; now he employs his Wiſdom more in ordering ſecond cauſes in ordinary ways to his own high, merciful, and juſt ends. Yet ſince the diſcovering of Chriſt God hath given us a rule whereby we may diſcern much of his Wiſdom in the knowledge of his end, as the knowledge of Chriſt removes the Veil from the Scripture in our reading of it *. *The ſame Vail remains in the reading of the Old Teſtament, which Veil is done away in Chriſt,* (which Veil is ſtill upon the *Jews*) and makes

* 2 Cor. 3. 14, 15, 16.

makes us underſtand thoſe parts of the old Teſtament, which otherwiſe would be utterly obſcure; ſo in the reading the Books of Providence, the knowledg of this end of God in them, will help us to underſtand the meaning of that which otherwiſe would non-plus the Reaſon of man. He that knows the end of one that is making a Watch, will not wonder at his framing ſmall wheels and filing little pins; but he that underſtands nothing of the deſign, would count it ridiculous for a man ſo to trifle away his time. Without the knowledge of this end, we ſhall expoſe our ſelves to miſerable miſtakes. As *Plutarch* miſtook the cauſe of the ceaſing of Oracles, aſcribing it to the change of the nature of the Soil, not affording thoſe exhalations as formerly; or the death of the Demons which gave thoſe Oracles. He had judged otherwiſe, had he known or believed the riſing of a higher power, the Son of Righteouſneſs in the World, who impoſed ſilence upon thoſe Angels of darkneſs; the moſt famous Oracles in the World ceaſing about the time of Chriſt. To imagine to interpret the motions

of Providence without a knowledge of Chriſt and the deſign of God for his Church, is as vain as to imagine we can paint a ſound or underſtand a colour by our ſmell. Correct Senſe by Reaſon in this work, and Reaſon by Faith. To what end hath God preſcribed Faith to ſuccour us in the weakneſs of Reaſon, if it had been capable to underſtand his ways without it, and if we make no uſe of it upon ſuch occaſions.

Fourthly, A fourth Duty. *Conſider the former Providences God hath wrought for the Church in the paſt Ages.* Let him not loſe the preſent glory of his paſt works, *Pſal.* 102. 18. *This ſhall be written for the Generation to come and the People which ſhall be created ſhall Praiſe the Lord.* Even for that work of his which is written to be done in former Ages. God loves to have his former works read and pleaded. 'Tis a keeping a ſtanding praiſe of him in the World. We have had the benefit of them, it is fit God ſhould have the glory of them, from us as well as from thoſe who immediately injoyed them. Our good was bound up in every former preſervation

preſervation of the Church. If the Candleſtick had been broken where had the Candle been? Had the Church been deſtroyed, how could the Goſpel have been tranſmitted to us, let the Duty we owe to Gods Glory engage us to a conſideration of them; and the benefit we have had by them alſo incite us, we uſually forget not things that are ſtrange nor things that are profitable; His works of old have been works of Wonder in themſelves, and profitable to us. To what end are the Praiſes of God diſcovered to the Generations to come, but that they ſhould reflect thoſe Praiſes to Heaven again, and convey them down to the Generations following, *Pſal.* 78.4. *Shewing to the Generation to come the Praiſes of the Lord.*

1. *This will help us in our inquiries in preſent Providences.*

There is a beautiful connexion between former and latter Providences; they are but ſeveral links of one Chain. The Principle and end is the ſame; That God from whence they come, that Chriſt to which they tend is the ſame yeſterday to day and for ever. What

God doth now is but a Copy of what he pourtrayed in his word as done in former ages; There are the ſame characters of Wiſdom upon both; The ſame goodneſs, the ſame deſign in both. The Births of Providence are all of a like temper and diſpoſition. We cannot miſs of the underſtanding of them if we compare them with the antient Copies: For God is in the Generation of the Righteous the ſame God ſtill. God is the ſame, his ends are the ſame, the events will be the ſame.

2. *It will ſupport our Faith.* The reaſon of our diffidence of God in the cauſe of the Church, is the forgetfulneſs of his former appearances for her. O! if we did remember his former goodneſs, we ſhould not be ſo ready to doubt of his future care. This was the Pſalmiſts care in his deſpondencies and in his overwhelming troubles of Spirit, *Pſal.* 77. 9. *Hath God forgotten to be gracious, hath he in anger ſhut up his tender mercies?* but *verſe* 10. He concludes, it his *infirmity*, and reſolves upon a review of the Records of Gods ancient works for his People, *and the years of the right hand*

hand of the moſt High, theſe times wherein he declared his Power and his glory, and ſo proceeds to the top of all their deliverances, *viz.* that out of *Egypt*. Doth Gods Wiſdom decay or his Power grow feeble? Is not his Intereſt the ſame? Is he not a God ſtill like himſelf? Is not his glory as dear to him as before? Hath he caſt off his affection to his own name? Why ſhould not he then do the ſame works, ſince he hath the ſame concern? God himſelf to encourage us calls them to our remembrance, *Iſa.* 50. 2. *Is my hand ſhortned that I cannot Redeem, or have I no Power to Deliver? Behold, at my rebuke I do dry up the Sea, I make the Rivers a Wilderneſs, &c.* Am not I the ſame God that dried up the Sea, that wrought thoſe antient wonders which amaz'd the World? what doth your diſtruſt ſignifie but the impair of my Power? Rouſe up your ſelves to a conſideration of them! And thence gather freſh ſupplys to ſtrengthen you in your preſent dependence upon me! He puts us in mind of them becauſe we are apt to forget them. *Gen.* 15. 6. When it is ſaid *Abra-*

ham believed in the Lord and it was accounted to him for Righteousness, God answerered him, *v.* 7. *I am the Lord that brought thee out of* Ur *of the Chaldees*, keep up thy Faith, and to that end, remember what I did for thee before in calling thee! cast thy eye upon that place whence I delivered thee! either from the Idolatries of the place, or the persecution he was in for the true Worship of God. And as God puts him in mind of his Mercy he had shewn to him before for the encouragement of his Faith; so the people of God have made use of them to this end. *Goliah*'s Sword was counted by *David* the fittest for his defence in his flight, because it had been a Monument of Gods former deliverance of him, 1 *Sam.* 21. 9. When he asks for a Sword or Spear, *Abimelech* said, *the Sword of* Goliah *whom thou slewest is here, and* David *said there is none like that, give it me.* How hasty he catches at it. There is none like that Sword that hath so signal a mercy writ upon it. That very Sword will not only defend me against my enemies, but guard my Faith against those Temptations that

that would invade it. This encouragement of Faith and Hope is the end of God in his tranſmiſſion of the Records of his former Providences to us, *Pſal.* 78. 6, 7. *That the Generation to come might know them and declare them to their Children*; From one Poſterity to another, *that they might ſet their hope in God.*

3. *It will enliven our Prayer.*

'Tis a mighty Plea in Prayer. How often doth *David* urge it? Thou haſt been my help, thou haſt delivered my Soul from Death, wilt thou not deliver my feet from falling? but in the Churches concerns too. 1 *Chron.* 16. 11, 12. *Seek the Lord and his Strength, ſeek his face continually: remember the marvellous works that he hath done.* A reflection upon what God hath done, ſhould be enjoyned with our deſires of what we would have God to do for us. When *Moſes* was praying upon the top, while *Iſrael* was fighting with *Amaleck* at the foot of the hill; he had the Rod of God in his hand, *Exod.* 17. 9. That miraculous Rod which had amazed *Pharaoh*, whoſe motion ſummoned all the

the Plagues upon them. That Rod which had ſplit the Sea for their paſſage, broached the Rock for their thirſt, and had been inſtrumental in many Miracles: certainly *Moſes* ſhewed this Rod to God, and pleaded all thoſe wonderful deliverances God had wrought inſtrumentally by it. No doubt but he carried it with him to ſhew to God for a Plea, as well as to the *Iſraelites* to Spirit their Reſolutions againſt their Enemies.

4. *It will prevent much Sin.*

A forgetfulneſs of his former works is one cauſe of our preſent provocations. It was ſo in the caſe of the *Iſraelites* ſin, *Pſal.* 106. 7. *They remembred not the multitude of his Mercies, but provoked thee at the Sea, even at the Red Sea:* they had loſt the memory of ſo many Miracles in *Egypt*, and which aggravated their Sin, *they provoked him at the Sea, at the red Sea*; they provoked him under a preſent indigency, as well as againſt former mercy: they provoked him in that place of ſtraights where all the powers on Earth could not have relieved them had Heaven neglected them.

The

The Provocation you may ſee, *Exod.* 14.11, 12. Which ſprang from a forgetfulneſs of his kindneſs ſo lately ſhewed to them. How apt are we to forget old Mercies, when we are ſo naturally apt to blot out of our memories, mercies newly received? If this were well conſidered by men it would prevent their enterprizes againſt the Church, and conſequently their ſhame and Ruine. Are there Records of any who have hardned themſelves againſt God and proſpered *. How might in that reflection be ſeen the fruſtrations of Counſels, diſgracing of attempts, ſhowers of Fury and Vengeance from Heaven upon the heads of ſuch. The reaſon why the wonderful works of God were to be made known to poſterity, was that they might not be as their Fathers, a Stubborn and Rebellious Generation * of men, if they did conſider thoſe tranſactions of God in and for his Church, they could no more think to ſtop the breath of perpetual powerful Providence, than to bridle in a Storm, or ſtop the motion of the Sun. To conclude this. Gods Providential Judgements

* Job 9.4.

* Pſal. 78. 6. 8.

ments are to be remembred: though they are for the puniſhment of the age that feel them, they are alſo for the inſtruction of the age which ſucceeds them, *tell* סַלְּרוּ number, be as exact as in your accounts, wherein you take notice of every number, minute and cipher. The works of Providence as well as the Doctrine of God are parts of a Childs Catechiſm, they are to keep up the conſideration of them in themſelves, and hand them in inſtruction to their Children.

Fifthly, The fifth Duty. *Act faith on Gods Providence.*

Times of trouble ſhould be times of confidence, fixedneſs of heart on God would prevent fears of heart, *Pſal.* 112. 7. *He ſhall not be affraid of evil tydings, his hear is fixed*, how, *truſting in the Lord: his heart is eſtabliſhed, they ſhall not be moved.* Otherwiſe without it, we ſhall be as light as a Cock moved with every blaſt of evil tydings, our hopes will ſwim or ſink according to the news we hear. Providence would ſeem to ſleep, unleſs Faith and Prayer awakened it. The Diſciples had but little

little Faith in their Maſters account, yet that little Faith awakened him in a Storm and he relieved them. Unbelief doth only diſcourage God from ſhewing his power in taking our parts. *Every one will walk in the name of his God, and we will walk in the name of the Lord our God for ever and ever, Micah* 4. 5. Heathens will truſt in their Idols, and ſhall not we in that God that lives for ever. Have we any reaſon to have a leſs eſteem of our confidence in God, than Heathens had of and in their Idols, we ſhould do our duty which is Faith and Hope, and leave God to do his work, which is mercy and kindneſs. By unbelief we deny his Providence, diſparage his Wiſdom and ſtrip him of his Power, we have none elſe to truſt, no creature can order any thing for the Churches good without Gods Commiſſion and Direction, what ſhould we truſt him for, for that wherein his glory is concerned, which is more worth to him than all the World beſides. Truſt him moſt when inſtruments fail. God takes them off ſometimes to ſhew that he needs not any, and to have our confidence

fidence rightly placed on him which ſtaggered before between him and the Creature.

1. *All the Godly formerly did act Faith on a leſs foundation.* The Godly Patriarchs who lived eight or nine hundred years depended upon Providence that long time, and ſhall not we for ſeventy years, the uſual term of mans life! They had Promiſes to ſupport them, we have not only the ſame Promiſe but the Performances of them too. They had Providences, we have the ſame and more, all upon Record in Scripture, all ſince the Canon of Scripture was cloſed, whatſoever God hath remarkably done for his people in all ages. *Adam* had but one Promiſe and but little experience of Gods Providence, yet no doubt truſted in him. We have a multitude of Promiſes not only pronounced but ſealed, confirmed by many repetitions, which are freſh obligations laid by God upon himſelf. The experience of all the Providences of God towards his Church for above five thouſand years, and ſhall our Faith ſtagger when upon us are come the ends of the World?

doth

doth it become us to have our Obligations to Faith ſo ſtrong, and our Exerciſe of it ſo weak? The promiſe of Chriſt * that a Virgin ſhould bring forth a Son was thought by God a ſufficient ſecurity to ſupport their confidence in him againſt the fury of their enemies; It being a greater wonder that a Virgin without loſs of her Virginity ſhould bring forth a Son, than the routing of an Hoſt of Enemies. Is not then the performance of this Gods actual ſending his Son to us through the Womb of a Virgin, a higher ground of confidence for the Churches ſucceſs in every thing elſe, than barely the Promiſe could be. All creatures in danger have a natural confidence in God, *He is the confidence of all the ends of the Earth*, but the Churches confidence may be more firmly placed in him, becauſe he is particularly the God of their Salvation, *Pſal.* 65. 5. *By terrible things, in Righteouſneſs wilt thou anſwer us O God of our Salvation, who art the confidence of all the ends of the Earth.*

* Iſa. 7. 14.

2. *'Tis your only way to have mercy for the Church and for our ſelves.*

If

If he *take pleaſure in them that hope in his mercy*, as it is in *Pſal.* 147. 11. He will take pleaſure to relieve them, He will *ſtrengthen the Bars of thir gates*, *verſe* 13. If he take pleaſure in them that hope in his mercy, then the ſtronger and more lively their hope is, the more intenſe is Gods pleaſure in them. If they do not hope in his Mercy, he hath no pleaſure in them and no delight to them. He hath a goodneſs laid up for them that fear him, and he will lay it out too for them that truſt in him, *Pſa.* 31. 15. *O how great is thy goodneſs which thou haſt laid up for them that fear thee, which thou haſt wrought for them that truſt in thee before the Sons of men*? 'Tis laid up for all that fear him, but it is wrought for them that truſt in him. It is manifeſted upon ſpecial acts of truſt and relyance, and wrought before the ſons of men. Thoſe that own God publickly in a way of relyance, God will own them publickly in a way of kindneſs. Faith is the key that unlocks the Cabinet of ſpecial Providence. Thoſe eyes which move about all the World are fixed upon thoſe that truſt in him,

him, *Pſal.* 33. 18. *The eye of the Lord is upon them that hope in his Mercy.*

The ſixth Duty. *Wait upon God in the way of his Providence.* Wait upon him as he is a faithful Creator *, much more ſince the title of being our Redeemer is added to that of our Creator, which ſtrengthens his Relation to us. Not to wait diſparageth his care, bounds his power, or reflects upon his Wiſdom: as if he had ſtript himſelf of his immenſe goodneſs and forgot both his Promiſe and his People; as if he had cancelled the Covenant and given up his whole intereſt to the Luſts of men. Wait in the ſaddeſt appearances, the hour of Chriſts death was diſmal in the World, and darkneſs upon the Earth. A Miraculous Eclipſe of the Sun taken notice of by the very Heathens, yet were we never nearer to happineſs than in that dreadful time when our Saviour was moſt dyed in his own Blood. The Sanguine Complexion of the Evening ſky is a preſage of a fair ſucceeding Morning, ſo many times is the red Veſture of the Church.

* 1 Pet. 4. 19.

1. *Wait upon him obedientially.*

Commit your ſouls to God but *in well* * 1 Pet. 4. 19. *doing* *. Uſe no indirect means, a contempt of the precept cannot conſiſt with Faith in either Promiſe or Providence. The obeying part is ours, the governing part is Gods, *Prov.* 23. 17. *Let not thine heart envy Sinners, but be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long, for ſurely there is an end, and thine expectation ſhall not be cut off.* God will Govern all the day but we muſt fear him all the day. When fear on our part attends Government on Gods part, there will be an end of our carnal fears and a good iſſue of our hopes. The greateſt deliverances of his Church have been when his People has ſtood ſtill. *Exod.* 14. 13. As that deliverance was a type of all future, and a ground of Faith, ſo the carriage God enjoyned was a rule to his people in all future ſtraights. 'Tis againſt the Laws of Gods Government for thoſe lifted in his Service to ſtir without order. The Law is our ſtanding Rule of Duty. Providence cannot be a ſtanding viſible Rule, becauſe of the variety and ſeeming

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ing croſsneſs of it ſometimes to our apprehenſions. Do not preſume to lead God, but be led by him: 'Tis our ſafety to follow him, 'tis our ſin and danger to preſume to be his Directors. We may loſe our ſelves when we are our own blind guides and fall into a ditch; but when we follow God, he hath wiſdom to foreſee the Precipices we may ſtumble into, and goodneſs to divert us from them. By interpoſing carnal devices, men may perhaps have their ends, but with little comfort, perhaps much bitterneſs to themſelves. *Jacob* by his haſty uſing his own and his mothers ſinful project for the Bleſſing, got it indeed, but a crſs two, for he was a man of Sorrrows all his days. By waiting in Gods way we ſhall have our ends with more ſweetneſs, becauſe purely a fruit of Gods care and goodneſs.

2. *Wait patiently.* How often are our Spirits troubled about future events and are affraid of the evil which threatens us, as if we were in pain for God, and in doubt of his wiſe Conduct. Think not Gods time too long. He waits as much for a fit opportunity to ſhew his

Mercy as you can wait for the enjoyment of it, *Iſa.* 13. 18. *Therefore will the Lord wait that he may be Gracious unto you; bleſſed are all they that wait for him.* 'Tis a part of our bleſſedneſs to wait for God, ſince it is a part of Gods kindneſs to wait for a fit ſeaſon to be gracious to us. 'Tis not for us to preſcribe Rules to God, but follow the Rules he preſcribes to us. He hath freely made his Promiſe, let him be Maſter of his own time to make it good. He will ſhew as much Wiſdom in accompliſhing as he did mercy in declaring it. God can do things in a moment, but it is his wiſdom to take time, that his People may have time to exerciſe their truſt, their hope and their patience. He will take time in the ways of his Providence as well as he did in the works of Creation. He allotted ſix days to that which he could have framed in a minute. He is Judge of what is needful for us and when it is needful for us. If God ſhould give us that, which is a mercy in its own nature, many times when we deſire it, it might not be a mercy. If we will truſt the skill of his Wiſdom for the beſt

beſt ſeaſon, it cannot but be a mercy, for he will give it us with his own glory and grace wrapt up in it, which will make it ſweeter to himſelf when his Wiſdom is honoured, and ſweeter to us when our good is promoted. Gods methods appear in the end both wiſer and better than our frames. Infinite goodneſs aims more at our welfare, than our ſhallow ſelf-love; and infinite wiſdom can conduct things to our welfare better than our ſhort-ſighted skill. He that knows all the moments of time knows beſt how to time his actions. As God ſtaid for a fulneſs of time to bring the great Redemption by Chriſt into the World, ſo he ſtays for a fulneſs of time to bring all the great conſequences and appendices of it unto his Church. *Every thing is beautiful in his time.* In its own time, In Gods time, not in ours *. &c.

* Eccleſ. 3. 11.

3. *Wait conſtantly.* Though the Wheels of Providence ſeem ſometimes to ſtand ſtill *, and God ſeems to put a period to the care of his Church, yet let not us neglect our Duty. Wait a while and the Wheels will be put upon

* Ezek. 1. 21.

their former rolling. Some particular paſſages of Providence may trouble us for a while, but in the iſſue God may anſwer our deſires above our expectations and thereby confute our fears. His Providences are ſometimes like Rivers that run under ground, out of ſight, but will riſe again with a delightful Stream, with ſome new Medicinal quality, contracted from the Earth by the way. *Joſeph* a Priſoner waits upon God for his Liberty, and God gives him freedom with preferment. God can bring about his Peoples ſafety by unexpected ways. Who would have imagined before that his own Dream ſhould make him a Captive and *Pharaohs* Dream make him a Favourite. The chief Butler remembers him not till *Pharaoh* was in an exigencie, and the divining skill of the Wiſe men of *Egypt* confounded. *Joſeph* loſt nothing by waiting upon God, who made ſo many circumſtances concur to promote his Honour. Wait therefore upon him in the ſoreſt afflictions. The Church is only afflicted in Mercy, but the Enemies of it are pulled up by the roots,

Jer.

Jer. 30. 11. *I am with thee to ſave thee; though I make a full end of the Nations whither I have ſcattered thee, yet I will not make a full end of thee, but I will correct thee in meaſure.* God deals with his People as a Father, who corrects to reform, not to deſtroy; but with his enemies he deals as a Judge. God's Providence like *Moſes*'s his Rod, may ſeem ſometimes a devouring Serpent but it is to convince the *Egyptians* and deliver the *Iſraelites.*

4. *Wait in the uſe of lawful means for preſervation*; Not to uſe means is to ſlight his Providence; not to truſt it. It ſeems not to conſiſt with the wiſdom of God to order things always ſo as to be neceſſitated to put forth an extraordinary power, in things which his creatures by a common Providence can naturally accompliſh. God ſaves by natural means; when they will not ſerve the turn, he will ſave by ſupernatural. God choſe an Ark to preſerve *Noah* in. He did not want ſupernatural means for his preſervation. He might have catched him up in a Cloud, and continued him there till the drying

of the waters. *Noah* doth not diſpute the buſineſs with God, but prepares an Ark according to his order, and he was righteous in his obedience as well as in his truſt. God would not preſerve our Saviour by a Miracle, when ordinary means would ſerve the turn. He commands *Joſeph* by his Angel to flee into *Egypt* with the Child *. *Joſeph* deſires not God to preſerve him by an extraordinary power to ſave his pains of travelling; he ſubmits to Gods order, and God quickly clears the way for his return. Indeed ſometimes the wheels of Providence are lifted up from the Earth, and do not go in the ordinary tracts *, but Miracles muſt be left to Gods Pleaſure, for us to deſire them is to tempt our great Governor.

* Mat. 2. 13.

* Ezek. 1. 19.

The Seventh Duty. *Pray for the Church.*

'Tis an encouragement that our Suit in this caſe will not be denied. The deſire of welfare is conformable to his Counſel which ſhall ſtand notwithſtanding the Devices of men. His Counſel in particular concerns of

Prov. 19. 21.

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men ſhall ſtand, much more is the ſtability of his Counſel for the Church. He is a God hearing Prayer in a way of common Providence, and a God hearing Prayer in a way of ſpecial attention, *Pſal.* 61. 1. *Hear my cry, O God, attend unto my Prayer. David* deſires that God would hear him, as more particularly concerned in his caſe. He is ſo in the concerns of his Church, will he hear an *Iſhmael* crying for himſelf, and young Lyons roaring for their Prey, and ſtop his Ears to the voice of his own Spirit in his People, pleading for the Church, dearer to him than the whole maſs of Nature? We have greater Arguments to uſe then in any other caſe. The Relation the Church hath to God; The affection God hath to the Church. *Lazarus whom thou loveſt is ſick*, was *Martha*'s argument to Chriſt. What greater encouragement to our Petitions than Gods affection, than Gods Relation. God loves to have our affection comply with his, God loves others the better for ſoliciting its welfare. *Moſes* had the greateſt manifeſtation of Gods Love after he had

* Exod. 32, 32. he had prayed for the *Iſraelites* *though in a caſe of ſin, and preſently after in *Exod.* 33. 11. God ſpeaks with him *face to face as a man ſpeaks to his friend*, and in the ſame chapter and the beginning of *Exod.* 34. God ſhews him *his Glory* as much as he was capable to bear. *Daniel* was a great Petitioner for the Church *. He was Gods great favourite upon that account and had the cleareſt and higheſt Revelations made to him of the courſe of Providece in the World.

* Dan. 9. 3, 21. Dan. 10. 2, 5.

The eighth Duty. *When you receive any mercy for the Church in anſwer of Prayer, give God the Glory of it.*

Pſal. 149. 1 The variety of his Providences gives us matter for new ſongs and compoſitions. What Volleys of joyful ſhouts? what Hallelujahs to God do we find upon the Ruin of Antichriſt, *Rev.* 19. 1, 2, 3. God calls for Praiſe out of the Throne, *verſe* 5. and the Church returns it, *verſe* 6. 7. 'Tis God rides upon the Cherub, 'tis God that ſits upon the wings of the Wind, 'tis God who is in all Inſtruments to quicken their motions and direct them to their ſcope.

Pſal. 18. 10

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The ninth Duty. *Imitate God in his affection to the Church.*

Chriſt did what he did for the good of his Church: God doth what he doth for the advantage of the Church. Let the ſame mind be in us that was in Chriſt; let the ſame end be ours which is the end of God. Thus we ſhall be like our Creator, thus we ſhall be like our Governor, thus we ſhall be like our Redeemer. Men take it kindly from others that love thoſe they have a reſpect for. God loves all that love his people, and bleſſes them that bleſs them, *Gen.* 12. 3. *I will bleſs them that bleſs thee, and curſe them that curſe thee.*

The tenth Duty. *Look after Sincerity before God.*

'Tis for the ſecurity of ſuch that God ſhews himſelf ſtrong. No man that fully believes and underſtands this Doctrine, but ſhould be glad to be of that happy Society, that Aſſembly of the firſt born, who are under the care of a watchful eye and the mighty power of the God of the whole Earth. When God choſe *Iſrael* the very ſtrangers ſhould for their own Intereſt joyn with them

* Is. 14. 1 them *. And to ſuch as *take hold of his Covenant* he promiſes to *give a name in his houſe that ſhall not be cut off* *. Yea, even *to the Sons of the Strangers that ſhould joyn themſelves to the Lord. v. 6.* Let this encourage us to Chriſtianity. God never encouraged men to be Chriſtians by Promiſes of Worldly greatneſs, but by Promiſes of a conſtant care of them for their happineſs, by Promiſes of making all things work together for their good. If God will ſhew himſelf ſtrong for thoſe that are perfect in heart towards him, then he hath no ſtrength for thoſe that are unſound and falſe in heart towards him. No man hath an intereſt in his ſpecial Providence without Faith. The Power, Knowledg, Wiſdom of God are all ſet againſt him. Though the whole World be in commotions, the earth be removed, and the Mountains caſt into the depths of the Sea, there is no ground of fear to Faith; but what Buckler againſt them hath Unbelief and Hypocriſie? What ſecurity againſt Wrath can Riches give you? What defence againſt his power can your Pot-

* Is. 56. 4. 5.

ſherd

ſherd ſtrength afford you. It was not for *Jobs* wealth that God made his boaſts of him, but for his ſincerity, *Job* 1. 8. *Haſt thou conſidered my Servant* Job, *that there is none like him in the Earth, a perfect and an upright man.* And for the want of this he loaths a World. Labour therefore for ſincerity towards God; beg it of God. Get the evidence of it and preſerve it.

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